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BROWN AS A BERRY.



BROWN AS A BERRY.

A Nobel.

BY

GEORGE DOUGLAS.

“Im Leben fern,
Im Tode nahe.”

ANON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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BROWN AS A BERRY.

CHAPTER I.

THE day great with the event of the MacNabs' intended ball has arrived. Mrs. Napier and Ferrier are staying at Quentinshope with the MacNabs, old Mrs. Ferrier being left at Carmylie with the children. The commotion usual on any domestic crisis reigns supreme at Quentinshope; there is a continual running up and down stairs from the lower regions: a banging and slamming of doors; the servants grow "short of temper," and Archie, finding any appeal to the bell useless, pathetically asks his sisters whether the whole household is going to the ball too, as they appear established on the staircase, and deaf to all his entreaties for shaving water. The ball is to be held in Queensmuir town-hall, for the reason that Quentinshope has been lately very elaborately painted and orna-

mented in the Louis Quatorze style by a Parisian decorator, and the MacNabs are unwilling to risk any damage to what has cost them a great deal of money. As many of the visitors come from the country, dancing will begin at eight p.m., to admit of breaking up before Sunday morning comes in. It is now a little past six o'clock p.m. The family have dined early, and are all engaged in dressing for the ball. Mrs. Napier has been closeted in her room for two hours, and if the result is not astonishing, it will not be the fault of either herself or her handmaiden.

"I never bargained, Anne, for such a preposterous thing as the erection of two raised *daïses* in the middle of the room," exclaims Mr. MacNab, coming out of his dressing-room to his wife's room, with a towel in hand.

"It's *bong-tong*, Archie," replies Mrs. MacNab, complacently combing her scanty sandy locks over a large frizette. "You don't know what *bong-tong* is, but I do."

"Perhaps I don't, but I know what being made a fool is," says MacNab, drying his hands. "I entrusted all these matters to you, and was amazed to find you had ordered such a thing."

"Such observations are very *de tropp* from you, Archie," returns his wife, putting another

frizette on her head, and combing the remainder of her hair on it.

“And for my part, I think it great nonsense having this ball on Lola’s birthday. It will mark her age for ever. People will say in a year or two, ‘Oh, she must be at least such and such an age. Why, she was twenty-one in October, 1872.’”

“Lola will be married before long,” pursues Mrs. MacNab, twisting in thick plaits and long curls in addition to her own hair. “There’s Mr. Lefroy and Mr. Mark, not to count Jardine, at the Bank.”

“Mr. Mark will have to show up his colours pretty well before he gets Lola. One never knows what those fellows do when they are abroad. He may have two or three wives in China for what any one can find out,” answers Mr. MacNab, struggling with a white tie. “As for Jardine, Lola is of an age to please herself, but if she does marry him, I’ll cut her off with—not a shilling, but a quarter of a farthing. He’s a smirking, vain prig.”

“Archie, Archie, you’re on my dress,” says Mrs. MacNab, looking behind at the train of her pink velvet gown.

“Well, you were always a good-looking woman, Anne, and your dress is really handsome. There is not another woman in Queensmuir who

could wear pink as you do," replies Mr. MacNab, fastening a diamond necklace round his wife's fat throat.

"We Jardines were always celebrated for our complexions!" returns Mrs. MacNab, in the tone of voice in which the 10th remarked, "*We* don't dance!"

"If Mr. Mark is a married man, something ought to be done to him for going about as though he were unmarried," exclaims Mrs. MacNab, energetically.

"I don't think Lola's heart is touched, but it will be best to tell her in time. I see no prospect myself of either of the girls going off the hooks."

"Mr. Lefroy has been very attentive to Lola."

"Not the sort of attention I paid you, Anne, thirty years ago. Well, there's no one here, so you need not mind my saying how long ago it is. But if you want to see any one head over ears in love, it's Dods with Miss Rutherford."

"Mrs. Napier's governess."

"That is to be Mrs. Dods on Tuesday first; only two whole days off now. After all I am glad the girls are not going off yet. We've spent a great deal on their education, and one thing and another, and now we are just beginning to have some pleasure out of them, they must needs want

to leave us. Anne," pausing, and not sure how the next words will be received by Mrs. MacNab, "Anne, about these *daïses*. There is time enough to send into Queensmuir to have them removed."

"Archibald!" says Mrs. MacNab, "I'll not have the *daïses* touched! You will sit on one and I on the other to receive our guests, and if you won't do it I shall remain at home. I will not be affronted in this way."

"Well, well, Anne," returns Mr. MacNab, soothingly, and inserting his arms into the sleeves of his evening-dress swallow-tail.

"Well, well, Archibald," proceeds his wife, "that coat does not set very well. It's all creases up the back, and looks as if you had been to bed in it. I am going to take my own way about the *daïses*."

"Well, Anne," repeats Mr. MacNab, trying hard to obtain a view of his back by looking hard over his shoulder, and nearly cracking the vertebræ of his neck in the attempt, "every one will be laughing at us. It is just as though we were the king and queen."

"So we are, of Queensmuir," returns his wife, stoutly, "are we not the richest people in this part of Kilniddryshire, and could buy up Lilies-hill and Carmylie, and all Queensmuir, if it

were for sale to-morrow? Lola can look higher than Mr. Mark, or Mr. Lefroy either, with his fidgety bits of old china, which haven't near the appearance of a good bit of Wedgwood, or that majolica which, to *my* taste, is truly sweet, and nice, genteel, and handsome, and has some show about it. It is of no use, Archibald, to stand there trying to talk me over, for I won't listen, and if you are not going to do as I wish, you may entertain the people as you can."

"But, Anne, such a thing was never heard of," expostulates Mr. MacNab. "I shall blow up that tailor next time I go to Middleby, as sure as my name is Archibald MacNab."

"The more reason it should be heard of now," says Mrs. MacNab, walking along before the mirror with her arms folded, and a lace pocket-handkerchief, fan, and scent-bottle, and a pair of gloves with ten buttons, in her hand, to see the effect of her train. "If you had listened to me, Archibald, we should have had a fine crest and coat of arms long ago."

"I can never get you to see, Anne, that it would have been ridiculous for us, considering who my father and mother were. They were honest people," replies Mr. MacNab, a little proudly, "but anything like a crest is absurd."

"Well, and if they were poor and worked for

their living, it was through adverse circumstances. Your father was of the clan MacNab, and your mother of the clan MacDougal."

"All of the name of Stuart are not related to the king," answers Mr. MacNab.

"The Lefroys' heir was just a grocer in London; but he sports no end of crests, and comes down to Queensmuir quite the *haut-tong*. Archibald, do you think my dress is *tropp de coltée*?"

"If you would say it in English I should have a better idea of your meaning."

"La, now, Archibald, you should get up a few French phrases, it sounds so well. Is there anything more I want? No, I think I have everything," and Mrs. MacNab floats like a frigate in full sail to the hall, where a shadowy crowd of servants is assembled to witness the splendours of their mistress.

"What a costly dress, Mrs. MacNab," exclaims Charity.

"La, Mrs. Napier, do you really think so? It's just a little cheap velvet at fourteen shillings a yard. Where are the gurls? Mr. Ferrier, I see you are ready, and perusing the newspaper."

Ferrier lays down the *Kilniddryshire Advertiser*, in which he has been reading "Supposed

death by drowning of the escaped prisoner, William Gow. No trace has yet been discovered of Gow's body, although the river has been carefully dragged. It will be remembered his clothes were found in the dock and his hat in the water, so he must have committed the rash act deliberately. The police have in no way relaxed their vigilance, and a suitable reward is still offered to whoever will produce Gow's body, dead or living. Great praise is due to the police for their vigilant, and untiring efforts," and he assists in placing a cloak round Charity without disturbing her smooth hair.

"Mamma, your head-dress is crooked!" says Lola, and Mrs. MacNab and she depart to arrange it properly, Lola further remarking her mother's *coiffure* is like a skinned rabbit.

"Wonder whether Dods will let Miss Rutherford come to-night?" observes Mr. MacNab.

"I did not know you had invited her," answers Charity.

"I always intended doing so. I joked Dods about the officers from Edinburgh, but I don't think he half liked it, so I had to drop it. They are not a very well assorted pair. Jane, run up to tell your mother to be quick! The horses will take cold waiting so long."

Jane obeys her father's injunctions, but does

not return. Mr. MacNab becoming impatient, rings the front door bell loudly, sends a servant with a message that it is getting late, keeping up a salvo on the bell all the time.

“Tell your master the more he rings the longer I will be. Lola, give me another hair pin.” Then as the domestic goes back to Mr. MacNab, “Your father has taken the *tig*, Lola. He refused to wear his robes, which he could have done perfectly well, as he once was Provost of Middleby, but I have made him give in about the seats. Fancy he would hardly do it, although I told him it would spoil the evening. Well, I suppose I may as well go now. Lola, take care of that nail at the corner of the landing, which always tears the braid off the bottom of one’s dress,” and Mrs. MacNab, feeling quite master and mistress of Mr. MacNab and the world, appears, ready to get into the carriage at once, and soothe her husband’s ruffled plumes.

To Thyrsa the last few days have passed very agreeably at the Bank. Her trousseau has come home, and has been inspected by the majority of Queensmuir, who have called to examine the dresses, and pass an opinion thereupon. Mrs. Hislop has not had so many callers since she herself was a bride, and sat in state for a week in violet satin to receive visitors, and the con-

sumption of cake and wine has been considerable. The Hislops are people of extreme respect, ability, and some wealth. None of their ancestors had ever been given to fastness. It did not run in their peaceable Lowland blood. The line of farmers, and afterwards tanners and saddlers, from whom they were descended, and who now slept in the parish kirkyard with more or less hideous heavy monuments "erected to their memory," had plodded quietly on their way, without a desire beyond that of amassing money, and had left some pounds and an unsullied name to their descendants. The Hislops own the Bank house, with a garden behind, some fields, and several shops and houses in Queensmuir, of which town they considered themselves the chief family and ruling potentates, with the one exception of the strong-minded Baron Bailie.

Thyrza has received a letter of congratulation from her aunt, Mrs. Salton, of Marshley Hall, and a large inkstand, for which the minister paid the carriage. The minister has acquainted the Rutherfurds of their granddaughter's approaching marriage, and in reply has come a very brief epistle, acknowledging the "receipt of Mr. Dods' favour," which shows him that Thyrza has been fully justified in the course she has pursued with regard to her relatives, who are "county

people." Cousin Jemima and Karen-Happuch have presented Thyrza with "Blair's Sermons," and a note containing a sincere wish she may read and profit by them. Two of the days of Thyrza's stay in Queensmuir being wet, she has had an opportunity of realizing what her future will be like with the minister at the manse. She tries to be very good, and endeavours to read a sermon. This will be capital practice for her. The minister will sit with her as he does at the Bank. She supposes they will not talk much more than they do now, although then they will be quite alone. The minister and she have not many ideas in common; and when one person takes an interest in music and poetry, and the other is always thinking of the efficacy of prayer, whether the planets are inhabited, and by what sort of people, the politics of the day, the advanced rate of living, and so forth, it will be seen that their conversation would be apt to fall flat. Thyrza thinks she must read no more of Byron. She has been, like most young persons, captivated by the glow of colour, and the dash and melancholy of his poetry. And now she will only have such books as Blair's Sermons to amuse her. The minister is fond of music. Thyrza plays to him every day after dinner, with the usual result of lulling him to sleep in the middle of

Beethoven or Schumann. He does not mean to be a barbarian, but long classical pieces of music invariably exercise a soporific influence on him, while on the contrary a lively air keeps him wide awake. A couple of wet days will be found trying to most ordinary lovers. Thyrsa is quite glad when the boys come up to lunch from the office as a break in the monotony of the morning. But how will it be in the manse, where there are no Hislop boys to effect a diversion? The time is fast drawing on now. The minister has got "the lines" ready, and the wedding-cake has been taken to Carmylie by William Burnet, the farmer of Carmylie Mains. Mrs. Hislop on her part is thankful her sons are not of a marriageable age, Tertius having been discovered writing a poem "To my Lost Love," beginning—

"Sweetest Thyrsa, adored of my heart,
Soon, too soon, fate bids us part,"

and so on, with the used-up rhymes of ever and sever, and moon, June, and spoon, when he ought to have been making up the Bank books; and Tom having played the truant one day, was found to have trudged right up the Chapelton Glen to the loch for some trembling grass Thyrsa had expressed a wish to have for her dress. And, however well-connected Thyrsa

may be, Mrs. Hislop does not consider her a desirable match for her Tertius or her Tom. Thyrsa has become accustomed to the minister. Habit is said to be everything, and even eels grow used to being skinned, although history has not preserved the name of the person to whom this revelation was made, and there is no evidence led to show that, albeit one eel did not object, all the race still prefer their skins being off rather than on.

“You can put on this locket, Robertina,” says Thyrsa, kindly. She has helped Miss Hislop to dress for the ball. There is a certain proud spirit about her of independence which cannot endure to receive benefits without being able in some way to give a return. Robertina is grateful for Thyrsa’s assistance, not having much eye for colour, and she is anxious to look her best for young Mr. Burnet’s sake. Thyrsa is desirous also to show how well and happy and prosperous she is, that Ferrier may be a witness of her good fortune.

“Oh, not that locket, my dear,” returns Mrs. Hislop.

“Why not? I should like Robertina to wear it.”

“Because that is the one Cousin James gave you. If he sees Miss Robertina with it, it will

look as if you thought lightly of it. The love of a good man is a great possession, Miss Rutherford."

"Oh yes, I know," replied Thyrza, fastening the minister's chain and locket; "what a tiresome catch this thing has!"

"Cousin James told me to say that he would like to see you if you had a few minutes to spare before going."

"I can go now."

"You have forgotten his ring."

"Oh, to be sure! I must not forget to mark myself 'sold.'"

"Miss Rutherford, don't be too hard upon Cousin James. If you are, it will break his heart."

"A broken heart! That would be a phenomenon! I have half a mind to try if his would break, just for the fun of the thing."

Mrs. Hislop does not look pleased, and Thyrza runs up to her.

"Don't be too hard upon *me*, Mrs. Hislop," she says, appealingly. "I say a great many things I don't mean, and I don't take time to think before I speak; but I'll do everything I can to be a good minister's wife and make Mr. Dods happy. I will indeed, and you have all been so good to me that I hope you will come and stay

with me, with *us*, at the manse, when Cousins Jemima and Keren-Happuch come. It won't be so bad with them, then. Oh! I never meant to have said that."

"My dear," smiles Mrs. Hislop, "I don't wonder you don't like the Miss Tods. I don't myself, but I am obliged to put up with them because they are Robert's relations. But don't you have them too often at the manse. Never mind what Cousin James says about them. They are terrible mischief-makers, for the matter of that, pious women as they are supposed to be."

"Oh, I'm glad you do not think I need. I thought perhaps I ought, as Mr. Dods wished it. They seem to think I am very wicked because I said I did not like reading Blair's Sermons all day."

"You had better go to Cousin James," continues Mrs. Hislop, "or else you will not have time."

Then when Thyrsa's back is turned, she says to Robertina, "A real, nice, unselfish lassie, but too young for Cousin James, and he, poor man, is just distracted about her. Seventeen and fifty-three! It is a great odds."

"Mamma, the MacNabs have come; there is the carriage driving into the Carmylie Arms inn stable-yard now."

“Where? let me look. Ah! dear me, what luck some people have to be sure! There is this little Rutherford girl, just fresh from her school in France, she comes over to Carmylie, and she has not been there many months before Cousin James falls in love with her; and your cousins, the Tods, have striven, might and main, these fifteen years for him, and given him slippers and hams and jams, and he would not even look at them. And then there are the MacNabs. I am sure they were nothing—nothing at all. Archie MacNab’s father was just a dirty, wild laddie, and the folks called him Deil MacNab; and look at him now in his carriage and pair, and the finest horses in the county. There’s luck for you—nothing but luck.”

“There’s a letter for you, Miss Rutherford,” exclaims Tom. He has been loafing about in the passages waiting for her, and has purloined the epistle from the postman. Tertius is in the office making fearful sounds on a flute which he is learning to play, in compliance with a chance expression of Thyrsa’s. “Cousin James is in there,” pursued Tom, indicating the dining-room with a backward gesture of his thumb.

Thyrsa takes the letter and goes up to the minister.

“You wanted me?” she says, presently, opening her letter, which bears a foreign postmark, and is from Mr. Spindler.

“Villios.

“DEAR THYRZA,—I hear with pleasure of thy happiness, and rejoice at thy marriage. May God bless and protect thee in that far distant country—Scotland. My little gift is not yet ready for thee, *petite*, but it shall be sent to thee. Will thy husband let thee play thy piano on the Sunday? Ah, that day is *triste* and sombre in Scotland. M. Paul asks after thee when I go to have my hair cut every month. Miss Holt is to be married to M. Joachim, thou knowest—her next door neighbour. Thy old apple-tree has been cut down for firewood. I miss thee sorely. What pleasure it would have been had I seen thee receive the gold medal at the Conservatorium, but in this life we get not all our wishes; and thou wilt be safer and more secure in thy manse—didst thou not call it?—and wilt be a good Hausfrau. The little Italian boy who was apprenticed to the tailor ran away. They were not unkind to him, but he tired of working every day. I and my sister are coming to live in England, in Loamshire, and open a *Kinder-Garten*, in which I shall teach my improved

system of music instruction. My pen is parting asunder, like the legs of a compass, so I must stop.

“Ever believe me,

“Thy true friend,

“HEINRICH SPINDLER.”

“Yes, Thyrza,” replies the minister, while she, carried back to the provincial French town by Mr. Spindler’s letter, wonders whether it is not all dream, from which she will wake to find herself in the *pension*, repairing the sheets and table-cloths, and listening to the discord of several different tunes played in various parts of the house at once.

“How do I look, Mr. Dods?” she asks, rousing herself from her reverie.

“Very nice,” returns the minister.

“But I want to look more than nice. I want to look lovely, charming.”

“So you do, beautiful,” says Mr. Dods. “What sort of stuff do you call this?” touching her dress. It is the cheapest and coarsest white muslin, and after buying ten yards of it, and a pair of white jean, high-heeled boots, with large cherry-coloured rosettes, Thyrza found she could not afford ribbon to trim it with. Necessity is the mother of invention. In the Hislop’s garden grows a barberry bush, covered with coral berries. Tom has

gathered bunches of these, picking off all the thorns, and Thyrza has looped up her skirts with sprays of barberries, mixed with trembling grass. Owing to the scantiness of material, the dress-maker said it was a choice between frills and a train. Both she could not have. So Thyrza selected the former, and it is made with a low body and short sleeves, and a number of "fluttering" frills. In her hair, which she has let down her back, she wears a bunch of barberries and trembling grass, and round her neck a gold chain and locket, the last containing a photograph of the minister, and is a *fac-simile* of one he has bought for his own watch-chain, with a *carte* of Thyrza in it, done by the Queensmuir photographer.

"It's muslin," replies Thyrza. "It will wash, so it is not expensive."

Tom pops his head in at the dining-room door. Thyrza is standing by the minister, and he has his hand on her waist. Tom shuts the door instantly. Tertius with his flute comes along the passage.

"By George and by jiggers!" cries Tom, "you may as well skedaddle. It's no go in there. Cousin James and Cousin Thyrza that is to be are going on. No admittance for the next hour."

"Going on?" repeats Tertius.

"Yes, you duffer, going on. Spooning, you know."

"Mr. Dods, shall you be very dull to-night?"

"We-el, Thyrsa, I shall be very dull. I had looked forward to this evening with you."

"But we shall have heaps and dozens and hundreds of evenings together when we are married," says she. "Shall I go to any balls then?"

"No, Thyrsa, I think not. I have no objection to dancing myself; there is no harm in it. I do not see why a minister should not dance. David danced before the Ark. But then other people do not regard it in that light, and it is right to respect people's prejudices, and not give unnecessary offence."

Thyrsa resolves to make an immense sacrifice, and renounce the vanities of the world at a swoop.

"Mr. Dods, would you like me to stay with you to-night, instead of going to the ball, because, if you would, I will?"

It is a great sacrifice to her. She has taken such pains to make herself pretty, and Ferrier will be there. The pleasures of life have not been very frequent in her path, and are likely,

she thinks, to be even less so. She squeezes her hands together rather tightly, pausing for the minister's answer.

"It would be a pity for you to stay now, when you have dressed yourself so neatly," hesitates the minister.

"But I took some trouble for you, too. You won't object to sit with me, although I am a little more gaily dressed than usual," pleading against her own inclinations and longings.

"You would much rather be at the ball dancing with those fine young officers?"

"No, I never saw them, and I don't care if I never do," says Thyrza, truthfully. "I thought you were dull, and would like me to be with you."

"Yes, Thyrza. I should indeed much like it, but as it is the only ball you will be able to attend, I will not keep you at home. You have on your chain and locket, I see."

It is almost as great a piece of self-denial on the minister's part not to take her at her word, as it has been to Thyrza to screw herself up to the pitch requisite to make the offer. She cannot prevent her face from brightening.

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Dods. After Tuesday we shall have all our evenings together. Don't sit up for us to-night."

"I have somewhat still to do in preparation for the Sabbath, having to preach in the Parish Kirk to-morrow."

"I don't think I shall come back to the Bank, as Mrs. Napier is going to take me back to Carmylie," says Thyrza, becoming aware from certain sounds without that the Hislops are ready to depart, but abstain from entering for fear of interrupting the lovers in their *tête-à-tête*.

"Give a knock, Tom, to warn them," remarks Mrs. Hislop, with reminiscences of the time when the banker first came wooing to her.

Whereupon Tom doubles his fist, and rapping with all his might, calls out, "Cousin Thyrza!"

"She isn't Cousin Thyrza yet."

"No, but she will be soon. She's promised me a big slice of the cake. I got a squint at it before Burnet took it out to Carmylie. She's twice as pretty as you, Robertina," says Tom, with the discriminating politeness of boys at the age when their own sisters are only girls, and other people's sisters are goddesses just dropped down from Olympus.—"Burnet said so."

"Oh, Tom, you nasty boy!"

"You should never listen to what little boys say," replies his mother, advocating the cause of the girl, not a general rule with her.

"Little boy, indeed! Why, my moustache and

whiskers are growing like fun ; they're ever so much further forward than Tertius's. Just feel them ! I'm going over with Cousin Thyrsa."

"Cousin James is going himself. Who bought stuff to make moustaches and whiskers grow an inch every night?"

"Where's Tertius?"

"Writing poetry, I think. Cousin Thyrsa, Cousin Thyrsa!"

"Coming, coming," responds the minister from within. Then rising, he looks down on Thyrsa.

"I've waited very patiently, Thyrsa," he says, "is it not true?"

"I don't know, Mr. Dods," she returned.

"You have been exceedingly cruel about that kiss, Thyrsa. All the time of our engagement you have never given me one. I have parted from you to-night, don't you think you might let me have one now?"

"Oh, wait a little longer, Mr. Dods," she begs ; "it is such a very short time now. On Tuesday you shall have as many as you like. They will then be all yours for——"

"You will then be mine," continued the minister, "and no man shall part us. Why will you never give me a kiss, Thyrsa? It is the sweetest test of love."

“ I don’t know,” again says Thyrsa, and to her inexpressible relief—for the minister is no longer to be put off from his lover’s privilege—Tom hisses through the keyhole—

“ Robertina is raging, Cousin Thyrsa ; she is afraid she will be too late, and Burnet will be dancing with——” The rest of the sentence is inaudible, for Robertina puts her hand on Tom’s mouth and nearly stifles him.

Then the minister, with Thyrsa’s arm in his, and Robertina, and Mr. and Mrs. Hislop, cross over from the Bank to the Town Hall. As it is but a mere step, and scarcely a dozen yards, they have no carriage. Cabs and omnibuses are unknown in Queensmuir, but will become general, it is supposed, in the year 1900.

Tom and Tertius remain in the dining-room, the former diverting himself with manufacturing a fly, combining all the colours of the rainbow, which is to be called the “ Thyrsa Podley Fly,” and Tertius continues to discourse lugubrious notes on the flute.

“ Hallo, Cousin Keren-Happuch,” exclaims Tom, “ what’s brought you down here to-night ? ” as that lady—or “ female in a meal-bag” as Tom calls her to his brother, he having just finished the perusal of “ Artemus Ward”—sidles into the room. “ Cousin James has gone out.”

"And where is Miss Rutherford?" she inquires.

"With Cousin James. They're never apart."

"And where are they both?"

"Gone to the ball," says Tom.

Cousin Keren-Happuch shakes her head. She never wanted to go to balls, nor to read novels, nor frequent theatres, nor any such like wickednesses. She knew what would happen.

"But Cousin James has not gone to the ball too?"

"Oh, hasn't he! That's all you know, Cousin Keren-Happuch. He's been gone this quarter of an hour to the Town Hall. Can't you fancy him cutting capers with his long coat-tails flying?"

"When will he be back?" asks she, in dismay.

"Not until four or five in the morning."

"Are you aware, Thomas, what to-morrow morning will be?"

"Why, to-morrow morning."

"But what besides that? The Sabbath Day."

Oh! how well it has been said that whoever toucheth pitch shall not escape defilement! How soon people are led astray! The pitch in this instance Cousin Keren-Happuch considers to represent Thyrza Rutherford!

"Tertius and I are coming to stay at the

manse when you and Cousin Jemima go," says Tom.

"I trust not, Thomas ; I trust not," replies Cousin Keren-Happuch, devoutly.

"Well, cousin, if you came to see Cousin James, he's at the ball, and will be there for several hours."

"I shall complain to Cousin Hislop of your manners, Thomas," she returns. "I brought a book for Miss Rutherford, from which I hope she will obtain some godly thoughts;" she deposits a copy of Young's "Night Thoughts" on the table, and takes her leave, very indignant and full of feelings, which in another person she would have described as a violent passion, but which in her own person she set down as sentiments of righteous indignation. Cousin Jemima and she bewail the perverted condition of the minister, and the sad effect of Popish principles on a man who had hitherto been noted for his strict adherence to the Confession of Faith.

"Tom, you should not have said that about Cousin James," rebukes Tertius, when the minister has returned from the Town Hall, and is quietly occupied with his sermon. "Cousin Keren-Happuch will tell Cousin Jemima, and Cousin Jemima will tell all Queensmuir, of the fearful fact that the minister of Carmylie danced all

night at the MacNabs' ball, and far into Sunday morning."

"All serene," replies Tom. "But I imagine that O. P. (an abbreviation adopted by Tom for old party) won't make me take her home another time when there is a nice girl in the neighbourhood like Cousin Thyrza. She just came thinking Cousin James was here alone, and if I had not said that, you'd have had her here all the evening."





CHAPTER II.

CARRIAGES and drags, in fact all manner of vehicles, with the exception of carts and wheelbarrows, drive up to the Town Hall of Queensmuir, each separate machine being escorted through the borough by the ragtag and bobtail of the place, who, considering there is still no policeman in the town, conduct themselves with, on the whole, tolerable propriety. The Town Hall appears in gala costume. A temporary porch of heather and evergreens has been put up in case the night should prove wet, the steps leading to the iron gateway above are covered with scarlet, and on each side are stationed Volunteers of the 14th Kilniddryshire Corps in full regimentals. A large royal crown of gas hangs suspended over the porch, to the admiration of the youthful Queenmuirians. Within the room where the Small Debt Courts are held, and the Parochial Board and Mr. Lefroy disagree every month on the subjects of the bad roads and the poor

rates, does not know itself under its present disguise. The MacNabs have had a man over from Edinburgh to do everything in A 1 style, and this is the result. An immense chandelier of crystal in the middle of the room with innumerable wax-candles supplies part of the light, the rest of which comes from the sides of the chamber ; all round the apartment are placed long narrow panels of mirrors, with wreaths of ferns and artificial berries, &c. ; between the panels stands of hothouse exotics, Tritonias and Gladioli ; and above these round mirrors with silver sconces arranged in stars of lights. At the entrance to the ball-room is a rockery of ice, fitted up with red and white camellias. In the middle are several fountains of eau de Cologne shedding their sweetness over the rocks and flowers, and the whole is illuminated by rose-coloured magnesium light, which, by an ingenious contrivance, is emitted from a small chamber above. Crimson rout seats are arranged in a square in the room, at the far end of which is stationed the orchestra and the raised *daïs*, the topic of debate, with MacNab and his wife.

The place is pretty well filled. Mr. MacNab on his *daïs*, draped like the Queen's with crimson velvet—some wag has already suggested it was made of jute—looks as men do look when ill at

ease, stiff, uncomfortable, and bashful. His feelings exactly coincide with his appearance, and he has just beheld a friend of his who has a keen sense of the ridiculous. If he had worn his Provost's robes as his better-half wished, his misery would have been complete. Mr. MacNab thinks he would a good deal sooner have been fixed in the dentist's chair at the moment when that individual assures you, "Steady now, sir, *if* you please; it won't hurt, and it'll be over in an instant, sir," than seated up on high. Mrs. MacNab, on the contrary, is troubled with no such nervous fears and sensations. She sits, fair, fat, and smiling with patronizing simperingness on her face, in her pink velvet gown, open in front over a pink moiré antique petticoat, a large pink cactus in her hair, and diamonds—real ones, not paste imitations—appearing at odd intervals over the body—at least what body there is of some seven inches of velvet above the waist, and in her headdress. Royalty stands to receive its guests, but Mrs. MacNab sits. Her husband is conscious of something painfully ludicrous about this part of the proceedings, but when Mrs. MacNab sits, *he* cannot very well stand. The guests are all instructed to walk up the steps of the *daïs* and pay homage to the sovereign of Queensmuir, and when dancing has

fairly begun, and carriages cease arriving, Mrs. MacNab descends from her *dais* and mixes with the common herd.

Mrs. Napier is fairly in her element of dancing, flirting and intriguing, and monopolizes the best partners from the MacNabs. Lola and Jane cannot understand how their partners dwindle off before their eyes ; Mrs. Napier is so sweet and amiable it is impossible to pick a quarrel with her, but the girls resolve and vow a vow solemnly never to come again to a ball with a dancing matron, who takes the men away and leaves them to be juvenile wallflowers. Charity is in good form to-night, and is undeniably the prettiest woman in the room. Her dress of dead white tulle is like frothed cream, and the only bit of colour about her is a splendid set of moonstones and necklace, with a butterfly for her hair, the property of the wife of the eldest son in the Napier family.

Robertina is soon dancing with young Burnet, but excepting Ferrier and Mark, Thyrza is not well acquainted with any one, and she remains by Mrs. Hislop for some time looking on at the scene, which is bright enough with the red coats and jingling spurs of the officers from Edinburgh Castle, the gay colours of the ladies' dresses, and the brilliant lights on the mirrors and the fountains.

“What, are you not dancing?” exclaims Mr. MacNab, who is now walking round the room, feeling much refreshed on his release from his elevation. “That won’t do at all, Miss Rutherford.”

“Oh, I like looking on almost as well,” says Thyrsa; “it’s very amusing watching the dancers; do look at that old lady, she is just like a piece of patchwork, with her different little bits of colour.”

“It’s not enjoyable though for a lassie like you to sit out when you have got a pair of feet to dance with. They are forming a set for the “Lancers;” come along, Miss Rutherford. Mrs. Hislop must admit I am as safe a partner as even the minister could wish.”

“But I never danced the ‘Lancers,’” replies Thyrsa, “and perhaps I should go all wrong.”

“Then I’ll set you right. Hoots, havers! Miss Rutherford,” adding to himself that it was a good thing his wife did not hear his Scotch.

Ferrier and Lola are their *vis-à-vis*. She has only seen him once since she left Carmylie, and then he was on horseback and riding through Queensmuir with Lola. The straight, severe style of evening dress is becoming to him. Thyrsa thinks he has grown quite nice-looking, and notices he has split the palm of his right

hand white kid-glove in putting it on, and she wishes she knew if he thought she was looking well ; and by the time she has reached this point in her reflections she recollects that Mr. Dods has a claim to the first place in her mind and heart, and that he is getting up his sermon in the Bank and also thinking of her. Then she is called upon to pay attention to the figures of the dance, and Mr. MacNab and she go "to visit" Lola and Ferrier. He makes her a low bow, and says, "How are you, mademoiselle?" which simple words, in the voice which is still sweeter to her than honey or the honeycomb, thrill her foolish heart as nothing ever has or ever will do again, sending the blood rushing tumultuously to her face and throat, from whence it recedes as suddenly, leaving her pale, indeed almost wan.

"I'm very well, monsieur," she replies.

"Seem speaking rather huskily," he continues; and Thyrsa and her partner visiting the other couple, there is no further opportunity for talking.

After the "Lancers" comes a reel, "Hoolachin." The bagpipes give out inspiring sounds ; Thyrsa looks like a brilliant humming-bird fluttering from flower to flower, with her lustrous eyes, her flushed cheeks (her colour has returned again), the scarlet berries in her brown hair, her crimson lips and white teeth smiling in

answer to some joke of Mr. MacNab's as she flits through the interlacing mazes of the "figure eight," hooks arms with him, spins round, "reel" again, and back to their places. The gentlemen change partners, and Mr. MacNab executes his "steps" with the precision of a dancing master, snaps his fingers, turns round and cries "Heuch," the dancers keeping such capital time that to the spectators in the gallery above they appear to move as though possessed of only a single pair of legs and feet between them.

"I wish the minister could see you now," remarks Mr. MacNab, after a spin round, which has nearly left him breathless. The music and rapid motion, with the lights and the whole *tout ensemble*, stir the dance-fever in Thyrsa; she dances, as she loves, with heart and soul, and seems so full of joyous, buoyant life, that Mr. MacNab cannot forbear expressing a passing regret to himself she is destined to waste her fragrance on the desert air of the fishing community of Carmylie. He does not say this aloud, for he would be sorry to sadden the brief hours of unalloyed happiness which are hers. Mr. MacNab offers her his arm, and they promenade in the passage, she feeling quite grown-up and like the rest of the world.

Then Mark asks to put his name down for a waltz, and when that has been satisfactorily performed, for several others.

He is a capital hand at the old three-time business, despite the number of years he has been out of practice during his residence up the Yang-tse-Kiang, and is besides an admirable partner. He never grows giddy just when one is beginning to enjoy oneself, and has got into the swing of the pace; he can do the reverse turn *à merveille*; knows exactly when to slacken his speed; will pick up fan or handkerchief any amount of times; steers clear of the other couples, and pilots skilfully through the greatest crowd. His partner never has the risk of coming to grief through collisions or cannoning up against that unlucky pair who may be seen in all ball-rooms, and distinguished by bobbing in different time at a considerable distance from each other, the gentleman holding on to the lady's waist with half a yard between them, the latter with an expression of unspeakable agony depicted on her face, while the former see-saws her arm up and down like a pump-handle, than which old simile no newer or more appropriate one can be devised. This couple invariably terminate unfortunately, and part with feelings of mutual hatred. The man lays the blame on the

lady, who could not manage her skirts properly ; the lady recriminates on the gentleman as she regards the forlorn remains of her *tulle illusion*.

Ferrier never was any hand at waltzing, or, indeed, at dancing at all. He left England too young to have much time for balls ; and having an elder brother who was the eligible, while he was already stamped as a ne'er-do-well, he was not often asked out.

" 'Pon my word, Miss MacNab, that's quite a show," he exclaims, pausing, and not sorry to do so in the middle of an attempt to accommodate himself to Lola's step, and finding it impossible to accomplish his wish, notwithstanding they have practised the "Trois Temps" every day during the past week at Quentinshope ; as Thyrza and Mark pass them, winding smoothly along without the least jerk or perceptible exertion, Thyrza's little dark coral-berried crowned head, her brown hair falling in rich abundance over her shoulders, with her face and eyes bright and radiant, is a good foil to Mark's fair clearly-cut features. "Are you fatigued now, Miss MacNab?"

"Not at all," says Lola, intimating she is ready to go on again. So Ferrier and she try once more. But as Ferrier does something like the "Hop Waltz," and Lola is doing the "Deux Temps," it is not surprising that Ferrier, after

almost upsetting a very small short man and a very tall thin lady, should observe—

“ I am afraid, Miss MacNab, I am not doing justice to your kind instructions,” Lola having acted as dancing mistress, or that she should reply, feeling they are making rather an exhibition of themselves—

“ What are you dancing, Mr. Ferrier ?”

“ I think if you have no objection, Miss MacNab, we will stop for a minute ; going round and round in a circle always makes me a little giddy,” says he, as men will say when they have had enough of it, and do not want to go on again. “ I am a bad partner. I am really very sorry, and fear you will discard me from your good graces,” he proceeds ; and seeing Mr. Lefroy, nails him on the spot with, “ Mr. Lefroy, I know you can dance as well as you do everything else ; will you deliver Miss MacNab from the thralldom of a shocking waltzer ?”

Mr. Lefroy, as in duty bound, replies he will be only too happy ; Lola and he depart, whereupon Mrs. MacNab, tapping her husband on the shoulder with her fan, asks him to notice his eldest daughter and Mr. Lefroy, while Ferrier retires into the passage lest any one should insist upon his dancing again.

“ Who is that, aw, little girl, with the long

dark hair?" inquires one of the officers of Mark; "have seen her style of action now, should not object to twy a turn or two with her."

"A Miss Rutherford; she's going to be married on Tuesday to the minister of Carmylie," returns Mark; "you're quite safe, my dear fellow. She won't expect you to propose."

The Captain and Thyrza are made acquainted, and after a few moments he decides she is a "vewy nice little party." Her short dress is in her favour too, and does not get entangled in his spurs. Mark, after remaining to see how the pair would prosper, goes into the passage in quest of Ferrier. Mrs. Napier is out of a partner, and she follows Mark.

"Oh, there you are, Mr. Mark," says she, playfully. "How naughty of you to go and hide; and there is Jack, too."

"I'm not going to dance any more, Charity," replies Ferrier, hastily. "Miss MacNab and I nearly came an awful cropper just now, and I shan't have such a near shave again. One does not escape a thing of that kind twice, and if it did happen, I should have to look out for a good rope to hang myself withal. Mr. MacNab would be having me up for breach of the peace."

"I will allow you to remain unmolested, but Mr. Mark cannot be permitted. I want you to dance with that poor Miss Lowe. She has not had a partner this evening. I think she will poison herself, for she has devoured her card inch by inch, and those satin-glossed ones are prepared with white lead. It will be a charity to save her from death by poisoning."

"What, that old woman with the red velvet bows, like detached crabs, on her head!" cries Mark.

"No, she is quite young, not over twenty. See, there she is."

"Worse and worse! I'll be shot if I do," exclaims Mark; "why, she is elephantine, and would tread on my toes and annihilate me."

"Not if I give you the photograph I have so long promised you," pursues Charity.

"The one with the Spanish comb and mantilla?"

"Yes."

"It is a tempting bribe, Mrs. Napier, but we will square it in this way. You'll give me a dance now, and the photograph afterwards."

"I think I am engaged," says Charity.

"Oh, put him off," replies Mark. "You can tell him you forgot, or he ought to have turned up sooner. What's his name?"

No person being down on her card for that dance, Charity invents one.

"There's the 'Beautiful Blue Danube' beginning," pursues Mark. "The band really plays very decently for a provincial one."

This is all Charity wanted, and Mark and she return to the ball-room, leaving Ferrier alone. He goes up to the gallery, from which a good view of the dancers is to be obtained. He can single out Thyrsa from all the rest by her long hair; she has all the officers in turn as partners, and never misses a dance. Then comes "Sir Roger de Coverley." She has old Mr. MacNab as her partner again. Down the middle and up again; set to partners, and so on; he sees MacNab lead her up to the top under the long arch of hands, and then another couple begins, and finding the gallery insufferably hot, he pays a visit to the refreshment-room, on which Mr. Lefroy has been pleased to pass an opinion to the effect, "Things were so-so."

When he comes back, Thyrsa is wandering about in the passage, as if looking for something.

"Have you lost anything?" he asks.

"My fan, but perhaps it is in the supper room."

"I don't see it anywhere. Did Mr. Dods give it to you?"

"Yes, it was such a pretty one."

"Don't see any traces of it. What will he say to you when he hears it is lost?"

"Oh, he'll buy me another, a dozen times smarter."

"You have not get rid of that cold yet."

"It is nothing."

"Have you been for many walks lately?"

"One every day, excepting when it poured. Mr. Dods is a good walker."

"You've about danced with every man in the room, mademoiselle. Won't you finish up with me to make it complete? They're just about to start a *galop*. I think I can manage that. You keep on straight ahead a bit, and then twirl round. The 'Lancers' are out and out the best of the dances. You've only got to walk about at different angles. Mademoiselle, may I have the pleasure of dancing this *galop* with you? It is the last time we shall have a chance of dancing before your marriage. Is it not to be on Tuesday?"

"Yes," says Thyrsa.

"So Dods has actually let you come to the ball? I wonder at that."

"Do you? I don't. I am not astonished at anything now. But this is the only ball I shall ever be at."

"Does not Dods approve of dancing?"

"Not for ministers' wives."

"I am not sure but that if I were in Dods's place I should not object too. How well you and I pull together! What a pity it cannot last!"

"No, it will soon be over," replies Thyrsa, with a deep long-drawn sigh; and Ferrier hearing that sigh places his strong arm tighter round her waist, and her small soft hand is clasped in his own sinewy fingers, and his long black moustache almost touches her hair, as her brown head droops on his broad shoulders, and they float away to the crash of the joyous music of the "Magic Bells" galop, which changes into veritable magic bells in Thyrsa's ears, as they mingle with the whirling crowd.

"I wish it could last for ever," exclaims Ferrier. "But of course you are so wrapt in bliss at the prospect opening out before you on Tuesday with darling James, that you can spare no thought for anything else."

"Oh, monsieur," says Thyrsa; "don't try me so."

"Only forty-eight hours now for you to be Thyrsa Rutherford."

"I wish Tuesday would never come," bursts involuntarily from Thyrsa.

"It will come though, mademoiselle, fret

and fume as we like. Time passes on mercilessly, taking with it the happiness of some and the misery of others. It is no more a respecter of persons than death. You have not got over that cough yet. After Tuesday I shall not be able to hint even to old Dods that you can't bear standing out under a shower-bath or a water spout. You must get well, mademoiselle."

"What would be the use of it? What is the use of anything?"

"Don't know," returns Jack. "Never tried to think; cleverer people than me have had a try to find out. When we have left Carmylie, and the new owners come to live there, shall you?"

"Don't go on, don't go on," cries Thyrsa.

"I won't if you don't like. Just let me say this one thing. When the jute merchant and jute merchantess who have bought Carmylie come to dwell there, Dods will rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for they are strict Presbyterians. They will fill the Carmylie seat, and add to the minister's collection on Sundays nicely. You are looking very pale," he says, stopping suddenly. "Are you not happy, mademoiselle? I have asked you that often before; this time, Thyrsa, give me a true answer. Don't think of me as the man who had the audacity to imagine that a girl worth anything would ever

give a thought to him. Why are you trembling, Thyrsa?"

"It's the cold air from that window."

"Draw your cloak over your shoulders. I want you to think of me as a friend who—well *likes* you on the whole, and would wish to see you really comfortably settled. Speak to me openly and freely. Are you happy?"

"No," replies Thyrsa, slowly and briefly.

"Don't you look forward to your marriage with pleasure?"

"No, I don't. Oh, monsieur, don't torture me with these questions," she exclaims, passionately.

"Am I torturing you, Thyrsa?"

"Yes, you are."

"Then you are going to marry the minister for the sake only of having a house of your own, and for the sake of being married?"

"No, that is not the reason. Why will you persist in tormenting me? What is it to you if I marry Mr. Dods? Let me be wretched if I like. You never liked me. You can't care. I won't answer your questions."

"It's a bad plan to marry to spite a person," pursues Ferrier, not choosing to contradict her assertion. "It's like cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. I've seen a little, now and

again, of life, and I believe that marriage without love is misery."

"Love, what's love?" quotes Thyrza.

"Don't talk so bitterly, mademoiselle. It comes badly from your lips, which ought to let fall nothing but sweetness. No, I don't care a button if you do make a hash of your life."

"It was you who taught me to sneer at love."

"And it was you, Thyrza, who taught me to reverence it. Let us forget old Dods and your engagement for to-night, and let us be Jack and Thyrza again as we were in the garret. Grey girl, be kind to your grey boy!"

"No, monsieur, I must not," replies Thyrza, firmly.

"Why not? It's only for half an hour, thirty minutes of paradise. Then, after that, we'll go back to monsieur and Mr. Dods's intended."

"No, monsieur, it would not be honourable. I have given the minister my word, and I will keep it in all points as faithfully as though he was here."

"I beg your pardon, mademoiselle," says Ferrier, quickly; "you were right to remind me of my honour."

"I did not mean to be rude, monsieur; perhaps I have been very rude sometimes."

"Don't, don't, mademoiselle," cries Ferrier;

“you’re sending me out of my senses. Must you marry Dods?”

“I can’t go back now, no, I can’t. The banns are to be proclaimed in Carmylie Kirk to-morrow, and our rooms are taken at the Tontine Hôtel in Glasgow for us,” answers Thyrza, a sort of strain on her lips showing she speaks with an effort. “Don’t let us talk about this any more. It unsettles me, and I am getting used to Mr. Dods. I daresay I shall be, not happy, but contented. Since you have asked me, I have told you. It is not meant that every one should be as happy as I have fancied people can be in their married lives.”

She is unaware how plainly Jack is reading her inmost heart, and her struggle between what she considers right and the dictates of her rebellious longings.

“It is too late now for me to break the engagement.”

“It is not too late yet, but it will be too late on Tuesday, when you are driving off from the Bank to Queensmuir Station with Dods,” says Jack, unconsciously pressing her left hand so tightly that her ring cuts into the flesh; “and it’s not the first engagement you’ve broken off. You’ll know how to manage with Dods better than me, having had some practice.”

"I never broke off an engagement; I only agreed with what you said. Oh, monsieur!"

"It's the minister's ring that hurts you, eh?"

"It's the only one I've on."

"Why, Thyrsa, you know it was you. I never dreamt of such a thing."

"Now, it is all the same which it was. If you really have the friendly feelings for me you continually say you have, you would forbear tormenting me with these questions."

"But you don't like the minister, you know you don't."

"This is too much, monsieur," says Thyrsa, impetuously; "and if I don't, in that way, pray whom do I like then?"

"A little bird told me," replies Ferrier, "but wild horses shall not drag it from me. Heaven help you, Thyrsa, if you marry the minister."

"Heaven will," she returns.

How much better she would have been at the Bank with the minister, or even sitting in the dining-room playing draughts by turns with Tom and Tertius, or perusing that truly edifying volume of Blair's Sermons, in which, by dint of hard perseverance, she had contrived to read fifteen lines during a wet forenoon. It is clear that balls are not meant for her, more especially balls where she meets Ferriers with steel grey

eyes and long black lashes. The minister is not a plain man. On the contrary, he is good looking, tall, and well formed, and in his lengthy minister's black garb, with a hat, a cross between a Jesuit priest's and a High Church clergyman's, looks quite a clerical dandy as he swells across the market-place of Queensmuir. The get-up of a not too rabidly Calvinistic-Presbyterian minister is similar to that of an Anglican cleric. The very strict and extreme array themselves after the guise of the Genevan school.

This has been Thyrza's little hour. For these few moments, whirling round to those magic "Bells," all has been *couleur de rose*. A great and heavy blank falls on her as the music ceases, and Mark comes with a message from Mrs. Napier that it is Sunday morning, and she is distressed Thyrza should have extended her gaiety to such an unseemly period. She has been expecting every moment Thyrza would come. Mark does not give the whole of the message, nor add how Mrs. Napier and himself have been flirting. Mark and Thyrza are very good friends. The knowledge that she is acquainted with the secret of his wife's existence gives a freedom and want of constraint to his manner with her. Until lately, excepting as a model for his pictures, she has never troubled his mind,

but within the last few weeks, when there has come an almost startling improvement in face, figure, and style of dress—she began to be tidy in order to show Ferrier the pleasure she felt in her engagement with Mr. Dods—he has begun to think her more than pretty. Mark accosts her in a confidential sort of way, which Ferrier takes for more than it is worth. Mark cannot help speaking to a nice-looking girl as though she were the chief person in the world to him. As Thyrza exclaims, “Heaven will,” Mark comes up and lays his hand on Thyrza’s, to call her attention to him. The band strike up, “The Joys of Matrimony.”

“Good for you, Miss Thyrza,” says Mark. “Won’t you have one round more?”

“Mrs. Hislop——”

“I will make your peace with her. Besides, you are a bride-elect, and brides-elect ought always to please themselves. They may do anything they like, from singing like good girls at the piano to riding *à la* clothes-peg, as some of the ladies have been known to do in the gold district of California.”

Thyrza hesitates, meditates, wavers, wishes, melts. She will never have any more dancing. The band is playing so charmingly. Mark is such a delicious dancer. Everything in the ball-room is so pretty, she does not want to

leave it. When she is married, she won't have any Gentile hankerings after these frivolities. The minister's wedding-ring will quell all these ridiculous delights and raptures whenever she is with Ferrier, when she and Mr. Dods *sit into the fire*—a Scotticism—on winter nights; he with that tome of antiquarian research and she with her work, and the wind moaning among the hills and the cypress-trees in the kirkyard, she won't ever think of Ferrier, oh no! People's memories change and their lives begin afresh on the wedding-day. She won't ever tire of the minister and his society, day by day, as the little Italian boy had tired of the tailor's shop in Villios and its comforts, preferring to wander through the country with his guinea-pig and guitar with the chance of sunshine one day and storm another. No, Thyrza Dods in all points will be as different from Thyrza Rutherford as John Ferrier is from James Dods.

"Come along, Miss Thyrza," pursues Mark, as she moves from Ferrier. They have the floor to themselves and set off at a pace which causes Mark to ask—

"Am I going too fast for you?"

"No, not in the least."

She is a born flirt, thinks Ferrier. She must be so. She is going on now with Mark, and

when she sees Mr. Dods she will go on with him too. Well, why should she not have her fling? It does not hurt him and it amuses her. But it does hurt Ferrier. He has set Thyrsa upon a pedestal as a glorified being, and the higher the pedestal, the greater the fall for the idol or statue.

"Jack, how much longer are you going to stay?" inquires Charity, entering the ball-room in her opera cloak.

"Oh, not much longer."

"How shamefully Miss Rutherford is behaving with Mr. Mark. Is that your paragon of perfection?"

"She is looking very nice to-night," replies Ferrier.

"Nice, Jack! How can you admire her? Dark people are not at all pretty, and what cheap tawdry lace she has for a tucker! Low bodies are quite out of fashion, for ball gowns too."

"I daresay they are for those who have not such pretty shoulders as Miss Rutherford."

"Every one to his taste; and then she has got her hair down her back."

"Every one has not such a wealth of tresses to let down."

"She has plenty of it, certainly, but it is very coarse, and now-a-days no person ever dreams of admiring dark hair. It is so common."

“If faces such as Thyrza’s were commoner, there would be an immense number of pretty people in the world. To my idea, Thyrza’s clear, smooth, olive skin, and splendid hazel eyes are far more beautiful than any fair face I ever saw. There is so much expression in her features. By Jove, if here is not the minister come to look after his *fiancée*.”

Across the ball-room with the pen with which he has been writing his sermon sticking behind his ear, walks Mr. Dods.

“My dear Thyrza,” he begins, “Cousin Helena has gone home, and as it is not seemly to be dancing on Sunday morning, she sent me to fetch you. She thought you had gone before her with Cousin Robertina and Mr. Burnet.”

Unintentionally, Mr. Dods’s tones are always pompous, and at the present moment there is even more pompousness than usual in them.

“Yes, Mr. Dods, I will come with you,” says Thyrza, half penitently, half saucily : then with a spark of naughtiness she adds, “I could not dance any more if I wished, for the heel of my boot has come off.”

She feels a sense of the heavy obligations under which he has laid her, and which she is going to repay by giving him herself. But he need not have invaded the ball-room himself,

letting every one see that she was his possession. Why could he not have sent Tertius or Tom or Mr. Hislop? Then she relents. He has been very kind to her. He never said *she* made love to him. He had let her go to the ball when he might have demurred and made himself unpleasant. He had given her lots of presents, and he was very fond of her. With what did she find fault, and what more did she or could she want? She looks round to bid farewell to Ferrier and Mark, but they have disappeared into the supper-room with the MacNabs and are not visible, so she and Mr. Dods go over to the Bank. Before leaving she takes a last fond glance at the rose light, and the fountains and flowers as the one spot of brightness connected with the iniquities and vanities of this pleasant sinful world which she will have to remember in her future life.





CHAPTER III.

ON this same evening of the MacNabs' ball in Queensmuir, Mrs. Ferrier and the twins are sitting in her boudoir. Carmylie feels empty enough now Jack and Charity are away, and Mrs. Ferrier also misses Thyrza very much. Rattray and Cecilia are in the kitchen. An immense peat fire blazes in the grate, filling the place with a faint spicy scent. Cecilia is knitting new feet to Davie's winter stockings, Rattray is engaged in dividing the small onions from the large ones in a pile of that odoriferous bulb, and several nets ready to receive the latter lie beside him on the clean sanded red brick floor.

"That has been an awfu' accident," says Cecilia, plaintively, clicking her shining steel knitting-needles in the sheath of feathers fastened in her waistband. "And the young leddies I read in the newspaper are dy-y-ing," she

concludes as though singing a tune or scale.

"They are deid," returns Rattray, shortly and sharply like a *staccato* chord at the end of a run on the minor key.

"They were gaun tae a marriage tae," pursues Cecilia, counting the intakes in the leg of the stocking. "Bodies shouldna be glued to the world; it's naething but vanity at the best."

"A body maun do the best they can for themselves whiles they are in the warld," rejoins Rattray, tumbling some of the large onions into a net. "Providence is a fine thing, but ye maun help providence, or it will no help you. It's a' vera weel reading o' the Bible, but if a body did naething else but read the Bible and say everything is vanity, I muckle doot you and I wadna get ony kail broth tae our dinners."

"Ye'll never be a reeleegious man," says Cecilia, shaking her head dolefully over her husband's delinquencies.

"I dinna ken aboot reeleegious, but I ken fine I like my denner and sae dae you, Cecilia."

"Henry, fat way will Wasp be barking sic terrible the nicht," cries Cecilia, startled by the loud barks and angry growls of the little terrier, which seems worrying or attacking some one in a ferocious and violent manner without.

“ He’s taking his nightly constitutional,” answers Rattray, unwilling to get up. “ Yer heid is aye filled wi’ havers, Cecilia. He’ll be barking at the cat that lives up-bye at the steading.”

“ Ye never see naething if it is no richt afore your nose, Henry. It is maybe a tinkler, or going-about body.”

“ Wha wad be ganging aboot at this time o’ the nicht ?”

“ Henry, I dinna like it.”

Meanwhile Wasp continues to bark loudly ; presently he gives a howl, and comes limping into the house on three legs. At the same time, Mrs. Ferrier having heard the unusually prolonged barking of the dog, rings her bell for Cecilia to come and inform her of the cause. She rises and goes up to Mrs. Ferrier, and as she passes along the passage closes the scullery door unconsciously upon the object which has aroused Wasp’s wrath and displeasure. This is neither more nor less than a tall strong man with one hand. Wasp has bitten his leg severely and torn part of his trousers, and the said man has kicked the little animal with his heavy foot, and made him leave go his hold by main brute force.

In point of fact, the man is Gow, who has been concealed in the garret of Carmylie House

for several nights, going out now and again by a certain secret staircase leading from the scullery to the attic.

After he had been three nights in the empty shieling on the Chapelton Moss, he began to find it a cold habitation, and it was also open to the objection that in walking from thence to his own cottage for food he ran the risk of being met by some person.

The peat had been left out longer than usual too this autumn, and several men were employed in clearing the turf away. Gow experienced, therefore, an uneasy dread of discovery as he lay on his bed of dried leaves and heather, watching through the chinks and fallen-out knots in the wooden walls the men loading the carts with the peat, and he at once inwardly resolved to change his quarters.

In the time of the Campbells, the former owners of Carmylie, he had been a stable-boy at Carmylie, and was thus acquainted with the construction of the house, more complicated than it appears from its exterior.

The third day Gow heard from his wife. Ferrier and Mark would leave Carmylie for Quentins-hope on the fourth day, Monday, in the "gloaming." He left the shieling, sneaked cautiously through the Chapelton Wood, and lurked in an out-

house at the steading until it was perfectly dark. Wasp, prowling about in search of rats and cats, annoyed him by snapping at his heels, but Rattray and Cecilia took no heed. On this night, Saturday, however, Wasp, again encountering him, had attacked him with greater passion and fierceness, and proved more difficult to shake off.

Carmylie having been built in troublous and disturbed times, is provided with several hiding-places in the thick masonry of the walls and an outlet from the other side of the garret.

In the scullery there is an opening from which some steps lead to a trap-door, and from thence it is easy enough to cross the plaster and rafters to the floored portion of the attic, where another staircase conducts to any part of the house that may be desired. Part only of the garret has been boarded over, so care is requisite in walking over the ceiling of that which has been left unboarded. Any thief who knew of this contrivance could conceal himself for days in the garret, slowly accumulate whatever stolen goods he wished, and make off into the country. Or he could take refuge by sea, a coal-sloop occasionally putting in at Carmylie harbour from Newcastle, which, on its return voyage, conveys one or two passengers for a small sum.

Everything depends on the view we take of circumstances. Gow considers himself a deeply injured man ; he sees nothing wrong in shooting game. It is as much his property as it is that of the laird of Carmylie. Hares and rabbits are just as wild and as common to all as are the flowers growing by the wayside, which any one can gather if they please. Gow concedes the right to possess the land and woods and moors, but the trout in the river, and game, both birds and animals, are, in his eyes, the property of all who can exercise the skill to slay them. The people in general share this feeling, and although not going the length of Gow in regular poaching, there are not many cottagers in the glens who have not killed a hare or a rabbit occasionally on the principle—the laird would never miss it. An attempt, formerly made, to close the rivers for the better preservation of the fish was met by the most determined opposition on the part of the weavers of Queensmuir, because they were infuriated at the loss of their day's fishing and pleasant rambles in the country during the summer months. To many a poor man it is an inestimable privilege to breathe the fresh air and enjoy the wild scenery, after dwelling the whole week in a small unwholesome room of which the atmosphere is impregnated with particles of yarn, and close enough to

asphyxiate even a rabbit. The populace were not long in manifesting their opinions. Trees were cut down by the banks of the Bogg, others seriously injured; the water at the bridge by the mill, where there were splendid pools for sea trout, after a flood was poisoned by quicklime and the fish were found dead on the shore by hundreds. Those landed proprietors who lived in a "Mutual Admiration Society" (Limited), were assailed in paragraphs of the *Kilniddryshire Advertiser* with letters expressing the resentment of the anglers, and the editor wrote a leading article in behalf of the "great unwashed," reminding the lairds that the closing of the rivers would not be forgotten when the seat for the county fell vacant at the next general election. This produced the desired effect. The rivers were again thrown open with the exception of those places which had always been preserved, and Mr. Lefroy had no longer to mourn over the destruction of his young plantations, or fume over impertinent letters in the papers, which mildly suggested he was suffering from determination of blood to the head in consequence of his intense attention to rearing Angus cattle and model cow-houses.

The garret is warmer than the shieling at the Chapelton Moss. Gow manages very well. He crawls across the plaster every night, slinks

down the steps to the scullery, abstracts all the provisions he wants from the pantry, and then returns the same way. Naturally he has many hours at his disposal. His friend the pawnbroker at Middleby has given him information of a country where he might make his fortune and raise himself to the level of a landed proprietor. All that he requires is the money wherewith to pay his passage to America. The pawnbroker has also hinted that there must be plenty of old silver mugs and forks and spoons at Carmylie which could soon be melted down in his smelting-pot out of all identity, and for which he would be willing to pay Gow a fair value. This idea has taken root in Gow's mind. It takes a long while to get an idea into his thick pericranium; but when it is once there nothing can dislodge it.

Among the chaos of lumber that collects in all houses after they have been inhabited for a length of time, the worn-out chairs, broken-down tables, cast-off clothing, and boxes of various sizes and denominations, he finds a pile of old magazines and newspapers. In one of the former there is a glowing account of life in the Far West. From this article, it is apparent that strength and faculty are all that is required. Education and capital are useless in

comparison. Gentlemen, it is well-known, are better at home, as are also all those who are not prepared to work with their hands.

Gow is not a quick reader. Perhaps for this reason he takes in the sense more clearly. The long descriptions of scenery, like an expert novel-reader, he passes over. What he does understand is that if he could get over to Oregon or Ontario he might make his fortune, and become a landholder himself.

But where is the wherewithal? His wife and family can but just live and pay the rent. Gow has never been anything but a sober man, in fact his sobriety was noted. But he has conceived a plan which he would fain carry out if possible. Meantime his nightly visits downstairs continue, till at length he grows bolder, and explores the dining-room. On the sideboard are several silver tankards, usually locked up, but left out since the MacNabs' departure. There is a bottle of curaçoa, and a punch bowl won by Mr. Ferrier's favourite horse, which afterwards broke down lamentably half way on the race course. Gow tastes the curaçoa as an experiment, and approves of it. He admires the massive bowl. His friend the pawnbroker at Middleby would buy it of him, melt it down, and there would be no more about it. It would be safer to go by sea

to Middleby, but rowing with one hand would be laborious. Out of the skylight he can see the fishing village, and the bay of Carmylie. The coal sloop which generally plies between Newcastle, Middleby, and Carmylie will not be due for some time. He must try to reach Middleby in the night. The evenings begin to draw in early now. He has never stolen anything yet; his hands are still unsullied by theft. He takes several pulls at the curaçoa, several long contemplations of the silver punch-bowl, and another perusal of the article on "Life in the Far West," before he can make up his mind to steal. On Friday evening, he coolly walks along the front passage to the garret. Wasp on this occasion scents him, but he gets up all right with the loss of part of his trouser-leg. Early on the Saturday he returns to the shieling after an interview with his wife. She has besought him to surrender himself to justice, but without success.

He has almost abandoned the resolution, however, of stealing the silver, when a hare bounding across his path in the wood, he shoulders a stick as though it were a gun, with the old instinct strong in him, and from that moment waits only an opportunity to enter Carmylie, and seize the plate. This opportunity does not occur until the gloaming of Saturday evening.

He has been compelled to lie all day in the shieling, with nothing to look at but the peat moss, with its black cuttings and the hills unbroken in their silence by the bleating of sheep, or the cooing of wood doves. Weary of his own company, he hailed the sound of the chirping of the robins even with pleasure. He feels in his bones that he will not leave Carmylie without doing something to Ferrier, the mark of which he will carry about with him to his grave.

“Cecilia,” says Mrs. Ferrier, “is there any one about the house to-night?”

“Aweel, mem, I was thinking there was, but Henry disna believe me.”

“There was a band of gipsies or tinkers here to-day,” pursues Mrs. Ferrier, “perhaps some of them are hiding in the out-buildings to steal the poultry.”

“I’ll send Rattray oot tae see, mem.”

Rattray goes out accordingly and makes an investigation all round the steading, but returns to state he has seen no one. Wasp rises on his approach, wagging his tail. Then Rattray perceives the dog is hurt. Gow has done more than kick the little fellow,—blood is flowing from a wound on his shaggy back, which wound has been the reason of his letting go his hold of Gow’s leg.

“Eh, puir bit beastie!” he exclaims; “but

he'll sune be nae waur o't. I doot it has been a tinker that did it."

"I'll no let on tae Mistress Ferrier," says Cecilia, "we had better keep it dark."

"Ay, I think so, and I'll lock all doors. The laird and Mistress Napier will be hame afore the morning."

"Well, Cecilia, have you found any one?" asks Mrs. Ferrier.

"Na, no a critter," responds Cecilia, "will ye hae yer supper noo? Ye'll no be tae wait the laird coming hame?"

"No," says Mrs. Ferrier, "I am too tired to sit up so long, so I will have supper and go to bed. Will you bring some wood and coals for my fire, please?"





CHAPTER IV.

I AM very sorry, Mr. Dods; I am very sorry, indeed; but I cannot marry you. Please do not be angry with me. I would if I could; but I cannot."

Thyrza has been thinking deeply and earnestly of what is to take place on the morrow (Tuesday morning) at the Bank, and through the whole of Sunday has striven to make up her mind to tell the minister of her decision before nightfall. But Sunday slipped away, and Monday has now come; and here, at the eleventh hour only, has she found strength and courage to make known her change of purpose to him. The little speech has cost her much thought and trouble; and after all, when it comes to the point, she says her say in the simplest words that occur to her. The events of the last fortnight have followed one on the other with such exceeding rapidity that she has had no time for reflection, and has felt

herself merely a passive agent in the hands of Mr. Dods and Mrs. Napier. Sunday being a day of funereal solemnity at the Bank, she has then been able to collect her thoughts, and has considered soberly and weighed seriously the *pros* and *cons* of her future. And the more she reflected, the more she wished to be free from Mr. Dods. All manner of wild plans flitted across her brain. Could she not run away? But whither was she to run and with whom? She had no lover with whom to go. She could not return to the *pension*, for it was now shut up, owing to the marriage of Miss Holt, the lady who had kept it; and Mr. Spindler, the music-master, had great difficulty in scraping enough to keep body and soul together from the profits of his music lessons and his employment in the orchestra of the theatre, to which M. Paul, the barber, had taken Thyrza to hear "Egmont." So Mr. Spindler, in the way of assistance, was wholly out of the question. To go back to Carmylie was impossible. There remained the hospital of St. Sulpice; but when one is only seventeen and has just begun to taste of the pleasures of life, one does not feel inclined to retire from the world to spend the rest of one's days in tending the infirmities of the sick, the lame, and the halt. Nevertheless,

Thyrza thinks that this would be preferable to Mr. Dods.

The minister and Thyrza are in the garden belonging to the Bank—a narrow strip of ground enclosed within high brick walls. Between two apple-trees in the orchard, whose leaves are fast ruddying into red and yellow speckled with black and brown and chocolate splatches, is slung a swing, in which Thyrza has hitherto been sitting, thinking over what she will say to the minister, and wondering if by any means she can escape from marrying him. Now, she rises and walks a little distance away from him. His astonishment is so great that it will only admit of his uttering the solitary exclamation—

“My dear!”

“I cannot marry you. I am afraid that you will think me a very wicked and ungrateful girl, after all your kindness. It seems dreadful and shocking; but I cannot help it.”

The minister sits down upon the seat of the swing which Thyrza has just vacated, and makes room for her to come beside him, but she remains standing near him.

“Do not go away from me,” he says, laying his hand on her arm, “I have not quite taken in yet what you said. Did I hear rightly that

you cannot marry me? What can be the reason for this extraordinary statement?"

Words fail Thyrza, and she is silent. The minister repeats his question.

"I do not love you sufficiently to marry you, Mr. Dods," she replies at last, with a calmness which is derived from despair.

The majority of men, no doubt, would have at once released Thyrza from her engagement on hearing her sentiments so plainly and unequivocally expressed. Not so Mr. Dods. He instantaneously resolves that although she does not at present love him, she shall do so before long. She has promised to become his wife on the morrow, and that promise she must be made to keep. How foolish the minister would appear in the eyes of his friends, neighbours, acquaintances, did he allow his marriage to be broken off at the last moment, when the boxes with Thyrza's trousseau are already packed and directed to Mrs. Dods; the carriage and horses engaged to convey them to the railway station, and the wedding-breakfast already set in the Bank dining-room, the door of which is kept rigidly locked by Mrs. Hislop, and only opened as a great favour for private view to intimate friends. Besides, Mr. Dods is blindly, madly in love with Thyrza, and only her known hatred

and detestation of all embraces and demonstration, either alone or "afore fouk," restrains him now. Anything of the kind, however, until they are married, he is well aware would mortally offend her. It is true, he is old enough to be her father, and that his habits are fixed as those only of an elderly man can be, who has, for the most part of his days, lived alone and in an obscure and out-of-the-way country village. Had Thyrsa suggested this argument, he would have answered it, though admitting its truth, by saying it was fortunate that she was young, for it would be easy to mould her to his notions and tastes; while, had his wife been nearer his own age, it would have been much more difficult for them to have got on, as her habits might have been as settled as his and the very opposite and contrary in everything.

"My dear, have you any repugnance towards me?"

"No, Mr. Dods."

"Has any one been influencing your mind against me?"

"No."

"Has anything been said or done by me to warrant any change in your feelings towards me?"

"No."

“Has any rumour, report, or gossiping-story reached you affecting me calculated to offend you or your worthy and respected relatives?”

“No.”

“Then what is there to prevent your fulfilling your engagement, Thyrza? You do not dislike me, you have no positive aversion to my society, and I think I may without vanity say, I have endeavoured, so far as is within my power, to indulge your every wish, and, my dear, I shall continue to do so. It seems to me, Thyrza, that this is a very serious thing indeed, a thing not to be trifled with. It is the turning point and crisis in my life. I do not scruple to tell you that all the hopes of my future lie with you, and I do not think you will disappoint me. What is your reason, my dear?”

“I—I don’t love you,” rejoins she, hastily, reddening over her face and throat.

No idea that Thyrza has ever had another lover besides himself strikes the minister. She has not breathed such a thing to him, and although slow and cautious in his premonitory wooing until started off the line by Mrs. Napier’s hints, he has always had his eye upon her from the first. The women with whom he has hitherto associated have been, if anything, too kind to him. He has not experienced an obstacle before, and the

novelty of a difficulty now gives zest and animation to his love-making. Thyrza had unconsciously hit upon the right way at the beginning of interesting both Ferrier and Mr. Dods, by sympathizing with the one and being rather cold to the latter.

“But as you have no absolute dislike to plead, I do not doubt but that the love will come in due time. It is not good to love a creature too much; within reason and within bounds is enough. If the affections are allowed to reach the pitch of a kind of idolatry——”

“What happens then?” she interrupts, with a burst of impetuous feeling.

“Then the Almighty removes the idol.”

“Oh!” says she.

Now she knows why it all ended so unhappily about Ferrier. She loved him too much, and like Jonah’s gourd, the temptation to idolatry was removed.

“I am sure, my dear, that you will now see the justice of fulfilling your promise.”

“Mr. Dods, cannot you wait? Let us put it off.”

“I like neither put-off marriages nor long engagements; they come to no good. To what purpose should we defer our marriage? The

love that is lacking will come when we know more of each other, and it is perhaps better that we do not start with too exalted feelings and thoughts, so that for you at any rate there is the less chance of disappointment."

"Oh, do let us wait," she cries, retiring precipitately into a hedge of sweet-peas hard at hand, like a rainbow ocean or a multitude of butterflies with stalks and leaves attached to them.

"No, Thyrsa," says the minister, rising abruptly from the swing and pursuing her, "I will *not* wait nor defer our marriage. I will not wait another day nor hour, nor minute longer than the time originally settled. If you should change your mind in reality I shall bring an action against you."

"You would come off with a farthing's damage," she replies, going farther backwards from him. "Stop, stop, Mr. Dods, stop there where you are while I ask you one question."

"Very well," he answers.

"How are we to manage about our different religions? I am an Episcopalian and you are a Presbyterian minister."

"That is easily settled; I shall want you to come to Carmylie kirk the first Sunday after

our return from the Western Highlands, but on other Sundays you are free to go to church at Queensmuir, wind and weather and roads permitting. I do not wish to interfere with my wife's religion unless, indeed, I can convert her to mine."

"Then you will not let me off?" says she, with an irresistible twinkle of mirth and mischief in her eyes.

"No, I shall not, and we shall be married to-morrow. In the sight of heaven we are already married, and I could claim you as my wife anywhere, at any rate in Scotland. I could insist upon the fulfilment of your promise."

"Oh, if you are going to insist and all that, I will have nothing to do with you," she exclaims, indignantly.

"No, no, Thyrsa; Thyrsa dearest, I insist on nothing; I beg and entreat," cries the minister, hastening over the beds covered with dead apple leaves to Thyrsa, and putting his arms round her, "Thyrsa, think of my lonely house and desolate rooms; think of my blighted life, the life which it is in your power to make or mar; have a little pity and compassion on me. Oh, Thyrsa, will not you listen to me?"

"Yes, Mr. Dods, I suppose I must," she says, with a deep sigh, "I promised you and I will

keep my promise. But don't, don't; you are not keeping your part of the bargain; keep yours and I will keep mine, and remember, Mr. Dods, whatever happens, that you compelled me to marry you."

"Whatever happens," replies the minister, solemnly, and yet triumphantly—triumphantly, because he has gained his point, and is sure of his pretty bride; solemnly, because it is his last parting from the girl who is to be his wife, and only a few brief hours remain before he and she are indissolubly united. "The blame rests with me. But nothing can happen, at least, nothing seriously disagreeable. Little unpleasantnesses one must expect in this sublunary sphere."

And Thyrsa and Mr. Dods go into the Bank, it being sundown and the farewell rays having vanished from the windows of the houses and the tail of the gilt dragon on the kirk steeple, on which the last sunbeam usually lingers when the rest have fled to the "golden west."

"I was in earnest, Mr. Dods, in asking you to release me from my engagement," says Thyrsa, halting at the Bank back-door.

"And I am perfectly in earnest in wishing it to hold good."

“I only want to do what is right.”

“You will do right by marrying me to-morrow,” answers Mr. Dods. There is a touch of sternness, not to say of asperity also, in his decided tones, and Thyrza clearly understands that nothing now short of a miracle can prevent her marriage with the minister.





CHAPTER V.

IT is Mr. Dods's wedding-morning. He rises early and throws open the window of his bedroom in the Carmylie Arms, to which place he has been sent to sleep for the last night of his bachelorhood, and looks out to see what sort of day it is. The weather promises to be lovely ; a good omen, he thinks, for the future. Above the little Norman turrets of the town-house, compared by irreverent-minded Queensmuirians to a gingerbread edifice, and the dark blue slate roofs of the red sandstone houses, rises an outline of azure hills, wooded towards the west but bare of trees and cultivated to the very top in the direction of the east. Some pigeons dart rapidly to the kirk steeple, then alight on the ground, cooing and pecking up some grains of corn, and again fly away, one more daring than its fellows balancing itself on the gilt dragon.

The minister does not eat much breakfast, and

what he does is quickly disposed of. After breakfast he goes to adorn himself for the all-important ceremony. He shaves his beard with care, and combs his white locks over the shining bald place on the crown of his head. Perhaps it is the sunlight which reveals more clearly than usual his wrinkles and crows'-feet, but somehow, until this morning, he has not thought how old he looks, indeed venerable, by the side of Thyrsa.

It is getting on towards eleven o'clock a.m.; he and Thyrsa are to be married at the half-hour, and to leave Queensmuir by the 1.20 train, *en route* for Glasgow, from whence they are to proceed to Arran and Bute for their honeymoon. To the minister's vexation, the new coat, vest, and trousers which were to be his festal array, do not put in their appearance from Edinburgh, where they have been ordered a fortnight ago. He interrogates the landlord of the Carmylie Arms, fumes a good deal, and storms a little at the tailor's dilatoriness. He waits until eleven o'clock strikes, but there has been some mistake, and after all he is obliged to don his ordinary garments.

Marriages in the Hislops' rank of life being uncommon events in Queensmuir, and the Bank being built on the High Street or market-place, the good citizens are nearly beside themselves with excitement, and a complete mob has assem-

bled at the Bank door. Flags in honour of the minister's wedding hang in many of the windows, all of which are besieged by sight-seers, on the look-out for a glimpse of the wedding guests as they descend from their carriages.

Mr. Hislop has gone to the steps of the Bank door, and said something vaguely about reading the Riot Act, and his being a magistrate of the burgh, but the mob is very good-natured and in the best of tempers with itself and everybody, and Mr. Hislop's remarks are inaudible in a ringing cheer for himself and his family, which is extremely flattering to his vanity, and calls forth from his pocket a shower of "sweeties" and coppers.

The minister elbows his way through the crowd, which cheers him vociferously.

When he reaches the Bank he finds Tertius walking up and down a passage repeating the speech in which he is to return thanks for the bridesmaids at the breakfast.

"As I have never been obliged to get on my legs before on such an occasion as the present, ladies and gentlemen—eh, eh—I yet venture to detain you for—eh, eh—a short space of time in which I beg to propose the healths of the young and lovely bridesmaids. Talk of the jewels in the mines of Golconda, talk of diamonds—eh, eh—these gems, however fair and sparkling,

are not to be compared to the bluebells of old Scotia—eh, eh—bluebells—eh—bluebells. Cousin James, what in the world does come after bluebells? I've been and lost the paper on which the speech is written, and I'm blowed if I can remember what comes after bluebells."

"Cut it short," says Mr. Dods, "speeches at a breakfast are usually a great nuisance. How is Thyrza?"

"She was O. K. when I last heard of her," replies Tertius. "I must have another try at this;—'As I have never been obliged to get on my legs.' I don't know what has come to me, I can't get any further now than 'My legs before on such an occasion.'"

While Tertius is talking the minister has been rummaging in each and all of his sundry and manifold pockets in coat, &c.

"Tertius, I have left the ring and the banns behind in the inn, and the clergyman will refuse to marry me without the banns."

"Jupiter Olympus!" exclaims Tertius, pausing in the middle of another trial to repeat the speech.

"Will you go and get them for me?"

"I don't quite see it, Cousin James," says Tertius, regarding his new swallow tails and a bouquet of flowers, as big as a cabbage, in his

buttonhole ; “ there is that crowd to get through, and perhaps I might not find the ring and banns.”

Thereupon the minister hurries back to the Carmylie Arms, and discovers the important document and missing ring on his dressing-table in his bedroom.

As he is there he takes another glance at himself in the mirror and sees that his hat, owing to the heat, has left a purple band round his forehead.

When it is removed he again contemplates himself, and this time with satisfaction. A thought again strikes him, but fortunately before he is out of the inn. He has not brought his white kid gloves with him, and it is impossible that he could go through the ceremony without them. He returns to his room, and procuring them endeavours to put them on—a more difficult matter than he imagined it would be. Any one who has put on a pair of new unstretched gloves in a hurry will have some sympathy with Mr. Dods on his wedding morning in his efforts to pull on the reluctant kid. He is so afraid of keeping Thyrza waiting, and that she may think him an unwilling bridegroom, that he splits one glove to bits, and reserving the other until he is at the Bank, he sets out for the second time on his road thither.

On his return for the gloves the landlord and landlady exchange covert smiles, and the minister tries to look as though he did not notice them, or at any rate as if he thought they were smiling at the vagaries of somebody else. After all, he is at the Bank too soon by half-an-hour.

The drawing-room has been fixed upon as the best apartment for the marriage to take place in. The greater part of the furniture has been removed ; seats are arranged round the room as if for a dance, and at the end near the two windows, looking out upon the street, a temporary altar is erected on which are a number of vases filled with hot-house flowers sent by Miss Lefroy from Lillieshill ; the family Bible, in which the Hislops have spelled out chapters on Sunday evenings when small children ; the Register kept by the Episcopalian clergyman, Mr. Brown ; and pens, ink, and blotting paper.

Mrs. Hislop has determined that as Thyrza is to marry Mr. Hislop's cousin, who is also her own once removed, Mr. Dods ; and as, owing to a request made by Mrs. Napier at the MacNabs' ball, the marriage is to come off at the Bank, the affair shall be done in style. Consequently, she invited the Lefroys and Mr. Mark, the MacNabs, as being county people, and a considerable number of Queensmuirians, in

order that they may with their own eyes behold the intimate terms on which she and hers are with the Kilniddryshire "upper ten" and theirs. Originally, it had been settled that the marriage should be at Carmylie ; but Charity, thinking it would be safer for Jack and Thyrza not to meet until the latter was fairly Mrs. Dods, changed the plan, throwing the responsibility of the change on Mrs. Ferrier.

Early as the minister is, most of the guests are before him, and after a violent attempt to pull on his gloves, which attempt ends in a miserable failure, he shakes hands heartily and energetically with everybody ; in fact, so energetically with some that their fingers ache and tingle for several minutes afterwards.

The Miss Todds, with a prayer-book between them—the Bank people being Presbyterians have been obliged to borrow prayer-books from their more enlightened neighbours—held upside down and open at the "Baptism for those of Riper Years," shake their heads mournfully as they gaze with eyes full of melancholy sadness on the devoted and manly figure of "dear Cousin James." Oh, that his eyes may be opened before long to the iniquities of the dark-haired Delilah, who has shorn their beloved Samson of his strength, and rendered him so im-

patient and fidgety for her arrival that he is unable even to take time to put on his kid gloves like a sensible man. Alas ! that when that awakening shall come, he will have been already sacrificed, and be a married man.

The clergyman, who is to officiate, is the next to come. Mr. Dods shakes hands with him in the same hearty style, which Mr. Brown excuses under the circumstances, and then takes him aside to explain the service, in order to prevent any awkwardness.

“Do you feel shaky, Cousin James?” asks Tom, with the easy assurance of one who is not in the least concerned in what is going to happen.

“It must be a fiery trial in a large church crammed to suffocation,” says Mark, laughing ; “it would be too much for my weak nerves. Imagine waiting before the assembled multitude for perhaps twenty minutes. The rack or the thumbscrew would be nothing to it.”

“It is my opinion that the walk up the aisle under the scrutiny of one’s neighbours is one reason for the great increase of bachelors in England.”

“When I marry, no one shall know anything about it, Mrs. MacNab. The lady and I shall slip into a church very early in the morning,

and she shall have on a print dress, or something common, and there shall be no person there but the parson, the clerk, and ourselves. The announcement in the papers will be the first news any one hears of my marriage."

"You will be clever if you can persuade the lady to submit," rejoins Mrs. MacNab. "I should not have felt myself properly married if I had not worn something different from my everyday gown. Besides, it is the great event of a woman's life, and so it is natural to make a fuss about it."

"I assure you, Mr. Mark, that the ordeal is worse in a small room than in a large church," says Mr. MacNab; "but I should think when you are married there will be great doings in your honour."

"Yes, Mr. Mark, cannons fired," answers Mr. Hislop, "the bells of Queensmuir rung, illuminations and sky-rockets, and the Volunteer band playing 'See the Conquering Hero comes,' as a compliment."

"Heaven forbid!" answers Mark, fervently.

"Robertina, Robertina, how much longer shall you be adorning yourself?" cries Tom, running upstairs to his sister's room as fast as a new pair of very tight fitting shiny patent leather boots will allow him. "Gurls are so

taken up with looking at themselves and their appearance."

"I would say girls, and not gurls, if I were you," retorts Robertina, perambulating the room in a state of pins and fluster.

"If you'd been civil I'd have told you what Burnet said of you just now."

"What did he say?" asks she, all eagerness and curiosity.

"A likely thing that I shall tell you after you have snubbed a fellow."

"Oh, Tom, I won't do so any more. Was it anything nice?"

"Do you see any green in my eye?" answers Tom, spreading out his coat tails and mincing along in the gait affected by his cousins, the Miss Tods, when entering a room full of people, he squeaks in a voice exactly like that of Cousin Jemima when Cousin Jemima is in a high key, "*Twiggez vous*, Robertina? He said, I know you are dying to know, so I will tell you; he said then that Cousin Thyrza was the belle of the ball."

"How do I look?" she inquires, not condescending to reply.

"Much as usual."

"How is that?"

"Rather red in the face, and your hair

cushions are shooting out in all directions," returns Tom, uncompromisingly ; " but you need not mind, Robertina. No one will look at you."

" I am not so sure of that," responds Robertina.

" Is my improver big enough ? It collapsed last week, and I had to stuff it with a *Kilniddryshire Advertiser* to make it stick out properly."

" Uglifier, you mean," says Tom. " Yes, it's big enough, as big as a dromedary's hump, and about as pretty. Cousin Thyrza does not wear one."

" Oh, Cousin Thyrza is going to be a minister's wife, which I am thankful I am not. She is no example for me."

" Everybody has come, all one's own uncles and aunts and cousins, and cousins a hundred times removed, and Cousin James is sitting on pins and needles, thinking Cousin Thyrza has eloped with some one, she is so long in coming. I am sure I should too if I had to marry him."

" Indeed, mamma says Cousin Thyrza has fallen on her feet to get such a man as Cousin James, and she has no money and never will have any."

" Cousin James has fallen on *his* feet. If I fall in love it won't be because the girl is a good housekeeper, or has good connexions or money ; but it will be because I like her and she likes me."

"Cousin Thyrsa has had a bad headache and has not been up long ; that is the reason she is not ready. Mamma was afraid the marriage could not come off to-day."

"Cousin James would go out of his mind if it were put off now. Hallo, Tertius, do you know the speech yet in which you are to return thanks for the bridesmaids? That is one comfort of not being the eldest. I have got out of it."

"He stuck awfully in saying it when I heard him repeat it last night."

"You ought to go and talk to Cousin Jemima, dear boy. You are her pet, you know."

"I would as soon touch the tail of a mad bull with a pair of red-hot tongs as talk to the Miss Tods to-day, when Cousin James is going to be married," replies Tertius, with an air of languid dandyism. "I have been looking into the dining-room, and there is a jolly spread, and such a wedding cake? I never had a proper tuck in at wedding cake before, but I will now."

"Gormandizing fellow !" mutters Tom.

"I hope you did not touch anything or make a mess of the cloth," says the unexpected voice of Mrs. Hislop. "I deserve a good deal of praise, I think, for having got up a wedding-breakfast at such short notice. I did not know until Saturday night at the ball. Sunday I

could do nothing, and Monday morning I began to get ready and invited all the people, asking them to excuse the brevity of the invitation. I think I have worked wonders."

"So do I, mother."

"Will you ask your father if he has told Mr. Mark he is to give away Thyrsa?"

"Cousin James is in the passage; in fact, he is coming upstairs."

"Preserve the man!" exclaims Mrs. Hislop, "what will he do next?"

The minister ascends the stairs, inquires after Thyrsa, and narrates the mishap with regard to his wedding garments.

"She will be down in a moment; but you have no patience, Cousin James. Really it is very unlucky about your clothes! I never knew but two cases before like it. The one was that of a bridesmaid who lost her wedding dress, and the other was a bridegroom who lost his luggage at Perth and had, like yourself, to be married in his ordinary coat. But observe the result, Cousin James, observe the result," continues Mrs. Hislop, emphatically, pointing her forefinger right into the minister's face—"in both instances the couples were separated before the year was out!"

"Dear me, Cousin Helena!"

“ Well, go down, Cousin James, and you boys too. I cannot be annoyed with you up here. The bride is ready, Robertina. Are you not ?”

“ You will never be married, Robertina,” replies Tom, as parting consolation, and he retires downstairs to the drawing-room with Mr. Dods and Tertius.

Then there is a pause and for the most part conversation ceases. Only little streams and trickles of talking continue. Mr. Lefroy tries to be jocular, and tells old “ Joe Millers” to Mr. Hislop, who has heard them hundreds of times before at Lillieshill, told in exactly the same words, over the prime sherry that has been to India and back again. Everybody feels it incumbent on them to look happy and say something funny, especially the male portion of the guests. This duty does not fall upon the women. They have on their best gowns and are consequently supposed to be in Paradise. Mr. Dods is unwillingly marched to his place by the altar, where he stands conning over the responses he will have to make in the service, and occasionally glancing with intense interest towards the door. Cousins Jemima and Keren-Happuch piously trust that something has happened to save the minister, and are prepared with consolations ready cut and dried on the tips of their

tongues. They are all very well at a marriage, but "give them a good solid funeral."

At length when Mr. Dods has been worked up to an almost uncontrollable pitch of suspense, the door is flung wide open and Thyrza enters leaning on Mark's arm, accompanied by Jane and Lola MacNab and Robertina Hislop as her bridesmaids. She looks very pretty, but pale, in her white silk dress made high up to the neck, and with a long train sweeping nearly a yard behind her. Instead of the orthodox orange blossoms, she has a wreath of white heather in her dark hair, plaited to-day in coils of shining braids round her head, and a plain white tulle veil without figure or ornament covers the little bride from her brown face to the foot of her white gown. A small spray of heath, white also, fastens her lace collar; but she has no adornment of jewels. Even the strict Puritanical old maids, the Miss Tods, cannot find fault with the simple, untrimmed, unflounced attire, quiet and plain as that of a Quakeress.

Then the minister does a most unprecedented thing. He walks down the entire length of the room between the rows of spectators to meet Thyrza, and taking her by both hands, says—

"How are you, my dear?"

"Very well, thanks, Mr. Dods," she replies;

but Mark notices that she trembles a good deal.

"She will be yours in about ten minutes more, Mr. Dods," rejoins Mark. "Go back to your place and I will bring her up."

Mr. Dods, not in the least disturbed, does as he is told, and in a few moments the service is begun. Mark observes Thyrsa stands as far as possible from the minister, and he perceives that her face is like her veil, perfectly white. She makes all the responses clearly and distinctly. The minister has some fears when the question is asked, "Has any," &c., &c., that their union may be protested against; but no such interruption comes. When the clergyman is about to join their hands, Mr. Dods cannot get his glove off. It was obstinate in going on, it is still more obstinate in coming off, and Mark is obliged to give him some assistance in the matter. In another minute James Oliphant Dods and Thyrsa Rutherford are man and wife.

It is the supreme, the crowning moment of the minister's life. He is oblivious of the congregated guests; he hears nothing of the holy words the clergyman is reading; he sees only Thyrsa, and with an irrepressible feeling of exultation and joy, he catches her in his arms and kisses her. When his lips touch hers a shiver

passes over her, and for an instant a burning scarlet suffuses her face succeeded by a deadly paleness.

Cousin Jemima is unable to control her wrath at the minister's disregard of the proprieties and decorum.

"Surely, Keren - Happuch, Cousin James might have waited until, at least, the blessing was said!" she exclaimed aloud in horror, and as she is standing near the minister he hears it, but he heeds it not. Mr. Hislop hears it too, and with difficulty restrains a laugh. Cousin Jemina has scarcely given vent to her indignation than there is a universal rush forward to the minister and Thyrza, and Mrs. Hislop cries out with a little scream,

"She has fainted!"

"Lay her on the sofa, Mr. Dods," advises Mark.

"Get some burnt feathers and dash cold water in her face," counsels Mr. Lefroy. "What a peculiar thing, very particularly so! Never saw a bride faint before."

"Smelling salts, Mrs. Hislop," calls Mrs. MacNab. "Archie, run for the doctor."

"Take care of her veil, Robertina, and do not crumple her frill," says Mrs. Hislop, practically.

“It is only a common fainting fit, so I think a doctor is unnecessary,” replies Mark. “She has been overdone with the ball, and the fatigue of dancing and the late hours, joined to the excitement of to-day, has been too much for her. I daresay she went to the kirk, too, on Sunday instead of resting herself.”

“To be sure she did; she went twice to the kirk,” answers Jemima Tod, austere, pursing up the prim corners of her mouth until it looks as though filled with sour plums. “Would you have had her stay at home from the kirk on the Sabbath-day, because she had danced too much the night before, at one of those vain things—a ball? It is well seen already that for those ordained to be ministers’ wives the pursuit of foolish and frivolous gaiety brings its own reward, even weariness and vexation of spirit! Now, *I* never was at a ball in my life!”

“So I should easily suppose, Miss Tod,” returns Mark, with a droll glance, which does the souls of Tom and Tertius good, and makes their hearts warm within them towards Luke.

“Do you think it is only an ordinary fainting fit brought on by the fatigues of the ball?” asks Mr. Dods, anxiously.

“Indeed, I do,” replies Mark, touched by the minister’s unfeigned and true affection for his

young wife. "Many girls of her age are subject to these fainting fits ; and during a London season, if it is her first one, many a lady faints. But after a short time they become hardened and accustomed to the late hours. Thyrza is not robust, but she is perfectly healthy, although not able to bear any great amount of fatigue. I have no doubt she will be quite well in a short time, and the change of air and scene will set her up for the winter. I thought her looking very pale during the last few days of her stay at Carmylie, before she came to Queensmuir ; but at the ball she seemed to have picked up wonderfully again."

"I think she will be more comfortable upstairs in her own room," returns Mr. Dods. "I will carry her there at once," and suiting the action to the words, he lifts his newly-wedded wife in his arms and conveys her out of the drawing-room to her chamber in the next story of the house, refusing all offers of assistance excepting from Mrs. Hislop, while Cousin Jemima moralizes over the perniciousness of balls, as being under the patronage of the evil one ; and Cousin Keren-Happuch goes off into an attack of hysterics and a flood of tears.

"What, what, what, what !" exclaims Mr. Lefroy, agitatedly, prancing up to her uncere-

moniously and flinging a tumbler of cold water indiscriminately over her new mauve cap and collar, in his efforts to calm and soothe her. "What, what the deuce are you pi-pi-piping at, ma'am? Compose yourself, Miss Tod. Pray be composed; *do* be composed," with another deluge of the cold-water cure over her, which completes the ruin and devastation of the marabout feathers in her cap. "What is there to cry about? We are not at a funeral; correct thing to cry at a funeral, not at a marriage though, not at a marriage. Did you never see a woman in a fainting fit before, Miss Tod?"

"I am not Miss Tod," gasps the appalled lady; appalled in two ways—first, by his shortness and sharp jerky sentences; and, secondly, by the contemplation of the damage done to her cap. "I am Miss Keren-Happuch Tod."

"Lord! what a name!" returns Mr. Lefroy, with an energetic dose of eau de Cologne on the top of Cousin Keren-Happuch's thin hair. "What could your idiotic godfathers and godmothers have been about to give you such a barbarous name? By-the-bye, being a woman, you would have only one godfather and two godmothers. But what were they about, I say, what were they about? Why did not you see after them?"

"How could she, Richard dear?" meekly remonstrates Miss Lefroy.

"Bless me, bless me, I forgot, I forgot. Of course she could not."

"Richard dear, Richard dear," says Miss Lefroy, feebly and appealingly.

"Never you mind us, Fan. Miss Tod and I understand each other. You are quite calm and composed now, are you not? Cold water is the best thing for the nerves. I saw what you wanted at once, saw it at once. I always see a thing at once. A glass of champagne will pull you together in no time now."

"I never indulge in stimulants," replies Miss Tod, freezingly.

Mr. Lefroy observes the cold atmosphere, and resolves at once to captivate her.

"Don't you? Then you ought to begin. A person of your delicate and fine calibre requires careful treatment, particularly so. Just allow me to relate to you an anecdote of how I cured Lady Elizabeth Gordon, who reminded me very much of you, by a prescription of my own. The chemist here said he would advise me to get a patent for it and shut up the doctors."

"I told you, Cousin James, that something would go wrong, because you lost your wedding-coat," says Mrs. Hislop, when the minister has

laid Thyrsa down on her bed and rolled back her veil, watching eagerly for the first symptoms of returning animation.

“I did not lose my wedding-coat. Either the tailor did not have it ready in time, or else he forgot to send it. But it was not lost.”

“However, be thankful nothing worse has happened.”

The minister does not answer. He is too much absorbed in watching Thyrsa, being visited by sundry qualms of conscience as to whether he has done right in insisting upon the girl's fulfilling her promise against her will. He has not forgotten that it is little more than twelve hours ago since she told him in plain words she did not love him. It is a rare occurrence for Mr. Dods to doubt the righteousness of his own actions or the purity of his own motives. He has been made much of by his friends and by his congregation. The latter have forgiven his bird-of-passage habits, saying “it was just Mr. Dods's way,” and the former have entertained him hospitably because of his capability of making a dinner go off well, and covering blank pauses in the conversation during the intervals whilst the courses are being removed and fresh ones brought in, by amusing anecdotes, most of which have found a place in “Scottish Life and

Character." In return the minister has entertained them at the manse to excellent dinners, milk, cream, chickens and trout being then abundant in the country. And so it comes to pass that he has grown to regard himself as a little above other men of his class and grade. He is not blind to the fact that Thyrsa's birth and "connexions" will increase his status in the eyes of his fellow-men. He is not blind either to the obvious and assiduous attentions of the Miss Todds, continued without let or hindrance for many years past. By looks and hints, more or less broad, had they themselves almost asked the question, which of us shall it be? Mr. Dods had seen and had understood, but while enjoying the excellent jams and hams they sent regularly with their compliments to the manse, and calling them "pious Christian women," he had gone no farther. Mr. Dods cannot entirely shake off the twinges of his conscience, which twinges remind him that he would have had no difficulty in condemning and pronouncing a verdict against a man who had acted as he had done. Suppose when Thyrsa wakes she should shudder and shrink away from him as she had shuddered and shrank away from him when he kissed her. The minister could not help noticing the emotion which seemed to pass all over her body, and it

had slightly damped his joy. If she should so shudder and shrink again he feels that his punishment will be greater than he can bear.

“Should you not leave her with me, Cousin James?” inquires Mrs. Hislop.

Her idea is that what she thought on the night of the tea party at the manse is correct, and that Mr. Dods had better have married some one older than Thyrza. But whatever might have been said on that point ought to have been said before, and she must now hold her tongue, for the minister and Thyrza are fairly married, and no power on earth now can separate them.

“I will not leave Thyrza,” he answers. “Why should I?”

“I thought she might be alarmed on awakening to find you looking at her.”

“She need not be afraid of her husband.”

“But she has been such a short time married. I did not feel quite at my ease with Robert at first.”

“We are as much married as though we had been married twenty years instead of twenty minutes. This is my proper place, and I shall not abandon it.”

“I wish she would come to,” says Mrs. Hislop,

“the potatoes for the breakfast will all be spoiled.”

“She is waking now,” cries Mr. Dods, “did you ever see such beautiful eyes and eyelashes?”

“The sooner you are away for your wedding jaunt, the sooner you will be a sane man again,” rejoins Mrs. Hislop, laughing.

“Am I married?” asks Thyrza, rubbing her eyes and propping herself up on her elbow.

“You are my wife,” returns Mr. Dods, in delight and ecstasies of bliss.

“Really and truly?” she continues.

“There is no doubt about it,” he answers. “And I should like to see the man or the woman either who would venture to try to part us.”

“Then you are better?” inquires Mrs. Hislop, “never heed the minister’s raptures just now. You will have plenty of time for that on your honeymoon. Bless me, men are all alike at first. Wait until you have been a wife twenty years, and see what your husband will think of you then. It is one thing to win a man, but quite another to keep his affection. Well, what I want to know is, will you be able to travel to Glasgow to-day?”

"I do not think I can."

"At any rate you have missed the train. Cousin James ought to telegraph to the Tontine Hotel for your rooms to be kept until to-morrow, but as for those other far-away places on the west coast that you are going to, I suppose you will have as much bother in getting a telegram sent there as one has in sending one out to Carmylie."

"Yes, Cousin Helena, I think that will be a good plan. Thyrsa, would you like to spend to-night at Carmylie?"

"Now, Cousin James, that is so like a man! Men are the most inconsistent beings possible. They expect us to dress on nothing per annum, and still look presentable, and never seem any older than sweet eighteen. Why, you know very well that the manse is being painted and papered. There will not be a room for you to sit in."

"Oh, pooh, nonsense! We shall find some room, I am sure."

"You will see that what I say is correct."

"Then what do you suggest?"

"To stay here of course like two Christians and be comfortable, instead of racketing off a drive of twelve miles to a house which I know you will find turned upside down."

Mrs. Hislop's plan does not at all fall in with the minister's views. The Bank is of course a comfortable house, there is no question about that. But to a considerable extent the minister's courting, partly owing to Thyrsa's dislike to spending any time alone with him, and partly owing to the publicity of the Bank, has had to be carried on under difficulties. Oftentimes when the minister had settled himself and his ideas preparatory to a cozy chat with Thyrsa, the door of the room wherein they were sitting was burst open, and some person or persons, known or unknown to Mr. Dods, hastily withdrew, as a rule, unless extremely bold and audacious, and rapid steps hurried along the passage, while a warning voice exclaimed, "Don't go in there, don't go in there ! They are there." Mr. Dods longs to be off and away with his wife. He detests the duty to his neighbours and kinsfolk of appearing at the breakfast, and in answer to Mrs. Hislop's offer, says dubiously, "hum."

"Would you like to go to Carmylie, Thyrsa?" asks Mrs. Hislop.

The first flicker of joy which he has seen on the girl's face since the night of the ball, streams across it at Mrs. Hislop's words, and she exclaims, eagerly—

"Yes, I should like it of all things."

"Then you shall go," replies Mr. Dods, as loudly as though he were saying "to conclude, dearly beloved brethren," on observing somnolent symptoms amongst his congregation.

"Well, go your own way, Cousin James, but I know very well you will find the house just as I tell you. Mind, I have warned you."

"I am afraid I have given you a great deal of trouble, Mrs. Hislop, and it was very foolish of me to be so silly on my—my wedding day."

"It was no trouble," responds Mrs. Hislop, mollified in spite of herself, "I propose that Thyrza changes her dress at once, and that we set off for Carmylie. To-morrow we shall call here on our way through Queensmuir for her boxes."

"And not come in to the breakfast?"

"No, I think not."

"Very well, and Cousin James, you can be sending the telegram to the Tontine while Thyrza is putting on her travelling things."

Mr. Dods having departed, Thyrza rises, and though feeling dizzy on standing on the floor, she succeeds in taking off her wedding finery. She is obliged to sit down once or twice, but after a few minutes the disagreeable sensation

passes away, and she is ready to go to the drawing-room with Mr. Dods, where she is received with congratulations and inquiries. There are still the names to be signed in the register. Mr. Dods writes his—James Oliphant Dods—with a dash and a tremendous flourish. After his comes the disjointed school-girl niggle of Thyrsa's. Mrs. Hislop is one witness, and Mark adds his signature on the side of Thyrsa's. Then come the farewells. Miss Lefroy almost breaks down at the last.

“God bless you,” she says, kissing her, “you see your mate did not die in the cradle. He came up to time. Did you pray for him as I told you to do?”

“No, I did not.”

“Naughty girl, but he came of his own accord. That was better. You have got an excellent husband, my dear. He is a good man. Every one will tell you so, and the world has no choicer gift for a woman than a good husband. I hope you will prosper and live to see your great grand-children.”

Mr. Dods shakes hands again, kisses Mrs. Hislop, and Mark takes Thyrsa down to the carriage, an action for which he has to render account to the minister.

"If you are not kind to Cousin Thyrza," calls Tom, "you need never show yourself in Queensmuir again."

"Adieu, Thyrza," says Mark, leaning in at the carriage window, to the admiration of the assembled concourse of Queensmuirians, great and small. "I have ended my parental duties by seeing you married. Are you not going to let me have some reward? What do good little girls give their fathers?" snatching a kiss.

The carriage drives off, Mr. Dods draws down the blinds, to screen himself and Thyrza from the vulgar gaze of the Queensmuirians, and Mark and the others after throwing showers of rice and old shoes, one of which last hits the minister's hat on his nose, return to undergo the humdrum festivities of speeches and wedding breakfast.

"That old party, Miss Tod, is the most amusing person I ever met," observes Mr. Lefroy, when everything is over and he is on his way to Lillieshill; "I assure you she was very much in love with me. I intend to present her with a new cap in compensation for the one I spoiled."

"It went off very well," returns Miss Lefroy, "I wonder what letters have come by the second post. The only thing was, that the bridegroom

looked old enough to be the bride's grandfather."

"She is a nice little girl, and I hope she has not made a mistake," responds Mark, musingly, "I shall call at the manse to-morrow morning, to inquire how she is."





CHAPTER VI.

THE evening falls sultry, and for the season of year, about the middle of October, it is strangely close and hot. Over the bay of Carmylie, apparently coming from the south-west, hang masses of lowering clouds. These clouds are singularly shaped, and in many of them the patterns of triangles and arches may be distinctly traced. It seems as though the looker-on might gaze through arches upon arches of opal-tinted vapour, until at the far end of the arcade the eye is lost in a flush of pink glow. In one of the largest of the clouds, the arms of a cross are plainly defined upon a triangular fissure in the vapour. The weatherwise among the fishing community predict a thunderstorm of unusual severity, and several of the fishermen who intended putting off to examine their lobster creels defer doing so until the morning, the coast being well known for its danger during a storm, and

the capricious changes of the currents of the sea.

But at present, as the carriage containing Mr. and Mrs. Dods reaches the brow of the brae leading into the single street of the village, nothing could be more peaceful than the aspect of the bay and the fishing village.

The sun has just dipped down behind the rocky summit of the Witches Law, leaving the sky all glorified with the brilliant colours of an autumn sunset. The red and white clusters of short and tall cottages, with their rusty tiled roofs and thatched chimneys, the natural pier of brown dulse-covered rocks stretching out into the water, the manse, the kirk and the kirkyard, and the outline of the merciless cliffs softened by a thin haze of mist, fine as the gossamer of a spider's cobweb, are almost more like an Academy picture than a living reality.

The mighty breast of old ocean is lulled to rest, save close to the shore where some seamews are circling and screaming over a fringe of foam.

The tide is coming in, but it is coming in very quietly; not with its ordinary hurry and roar and splash. It comes creeping, surging, rippling along in a very leisurely manner, gurgling with little foamy bubbles on its different currents that

eddy under and above each other, through the salmon-stake nets, and the cleverly contrived room in which the fish meet their fate. At the end of the nets nearest the village is a heap of silver, consisting of a 'hundred and seventy salmon, some of them twenty and thirty pounds in weight, only a few minutes ago killed and taken out of the trap by the fishermen, several of whom are removing the fish into a cart with all possible speed.

The fishwives are carrying baskets of fresh haddocks, and dulse, and bait, from the shore. The fishermen sit at their cottage doors mending their nets and whistling cheerfully. At the Holy Well, a favourite place for village flirtation, a handsome dashing young fellow, possessed of about as much money as "Jamie," in Auld Robin Gray, utterly ineligible and undesirable in every respect, and consequently all the more fascinating, stands talking nonsense to a pretty barefooted girl, who ought to be at home cooking her father's supper. Some boys are playing marbles and a knot of men collected together are smoking, while one more learned than the rest, spells out aloud from last week's Advertiser, the latest London news.

The improvements and painting have been going on actively at the manse since the

minister's departure, and Tibbie has managed the house-cleaning all her own way. Every room has been turned out at once. There is not a carpet left down on the floors, nor a curtain at the windows; and for the greater ease of Tibbie, and the more thorough cleansing of the manse, from basement story to attic, she has had every bedstead taken to pieces, the beds carried to a small spare closet, and there laid, with the mattresses above the feather beds. Chairs, tables, &c., have been hoisted on to the landing, and there remain, poised one upon the other.

The minister's marriage being a topic of absorbing interest both to the village and the people in the glen, Tibbie has had numerous visitors to see how things were going on at the manse. Then would Tibbie pause in the middle of sweeping or scrubbing the floor to conduct the visitors over the manse, and examine the brown paper parcels containing the new furniture for Thyrza's drawing-room, that had been sent from Middleby, as far as brown paper parcels can be examined without being absolutely opened.

This happens to be the day selected by the judicious Tibbie to have all the chimneys of the manse swept, excepting those belonging to the bedrooms, where the painters and paperers are at work; but owing to sundry interruptions,

although it is now approaching towards teatime, she has not succeeded in finishing the operations of cleansing away the soot.

¹⁰⁻¹⁰⁻⁵ Rattray and a small boy putting in their appearance, she decides on leaving this for another day, and descends to the front passage.

"Is the meenister at home?" asks the said boy.

"Na, and what is mair, he will no be at hame for a fortnicht. What are ye wanting him for?"

"Joanna Rea is deeing."

"That auld wife! She has been deeing sin' ever I kenned her. I doot she will need tae dee wanting the meenister. He is awa' on his marriage jaunt. Gang ben to the kitchen, and sit ye doon, and I will bring ye a piece bread and jelly."

"And how are you coming on wi' the pent-ing, Tibbie?" inquires Rattray.

"Dear bless me! if there is no a carriage stopping at the manse gate," exclaims Tibbie, "and the losh keep me, there is the meenister and that lassie he has taen tae be his wife getting oot. Where in the name o' Fate will they bide the nicht? It is pairfeckly redeecklous o' them coming out bye."

"This is our home, Thyrza dear," says Mr.

Dods, opening the wicket gate for her to enter the garden. "God grant it may prove a happy one to you, and that you may never have cause to regret the step I insisted on your taking of marrying me."

"I hope not," she replies. "I do not think I shall."

"You wear no earrings," continues Mr. Dods, turning to her with the air of some one making a discovery.

"Have you not noticed that before?"

"No, and I see you have not had your ears pierced. When we are in Glasgow this week, I shall take you to a jeweller's and get them pierced for you."

"I do not like earrings, Mr. Dods, and I am such a coward, that I could not bear having my ears pierced. It seems to me a barbarous custom to wear jewels suspended in one's flesh."

"Earrings are ornaments I admire very much. They are extremely becoming to most faces, and to you the flash of gold and jewels would be especially suitable."

"Suitable for a minister's wife?" says she, archly.

"Yes, they would be suitable for your young fresh face. You have heard so much about the duties of ministers' wives, what they should wear,

and what they should do, that I am afraid you have taken a dislike to the title of minister. Should you have preferred me to have been of another profession?"

"No, I should not. I cannot fancy your ever having been anything else than just as you are now—long black coat tails, white choker, and white hair."

"Yet there was a time, Thyrza, when I was called the 'Black Prince' by my fellow students, because of the darkness of my hair."

"*You*, Mr. Dods!"

There is as much expression and astonishment and incredulity in Thyrza's "*You*, Mr. Dods," as a schoolboy throws into his favourite exclamation, "*Rather!*" It expresses she is unable to imagine Mr. Dods as ever being young, or anything but solemn and slow in his manner of speech; in fact, exactly as he is at present. Some men are almost as touchy on the subject of their age and appearance as women. Mr. Dods thinks a good deal of his looks. He has flattered himself he is not really so very much too old for Thyrza. Her exclamation of "*You!* Mr. Dods," is not pleasing to him, and, without lingering longer, he proceeds up the walk between the high box-edging to the manse.

Tibbie has gone to divest herself of some of

the soot, and to put on a pair of shoes ; Rattray is the first person who meets Mr. Dods's eye on entering the hall.

" Well, Rattray, allow me to introduce my wife, Mrs. Dods."

" And it is yersel, Maister Dods, is it?" answers Rattray, extending his honest, horny, hard-working hand. " And this is the lassie. And sae ye are married noo, Miss Rutherford—Axing yer pardin, Mistress Dods. All lassies think they are richt gin they were but married. How are you liking yer new stawtion in life?"

" I have not had time yet to find out," returns Thyrza, laughing. " As far as it has gone, it has been very nice."

" Let's have a look at yer ring," continues Rattray ; " it is a gey thick ane."

" How have you all been since I left?" asks the minister. " Is any one married or has any one died?"

" There is nae speak o' onybody getting married but yersel and the lassie here, and that has made a gey speak. I suppose," very insinuatingly and confidentially, " that there will no be sic a thing in the manse as some whisky tae drink my respects tae the mistress and yersel?"

" I will get you some when I come downstairs," answers Mr. Dods. " Thyrza, will you

come and see how the painting is getting on in the drawing-room?"

Mr. Dods and Thyrza go to the drawing-room, and from thence to the other rooms—which are all in more or less dire confusion, and covered with the relics of soot. At each fresh survey, he says, "Dear me! dear me!" and having been into the whole, he and Thyrza return downstairs, Mr. Dods feeling considerably depressed.

"Do not tell Cousin Helena," he begs, "she will crow over me to the end of her days."

"Indeed, Mr. Dods, I shall tell her first thing to-morrow morning," says Thyrza, amused at his discomposure. "Where shall we find a room to sit in? It is impossible to sit in any we have seen."

"Would it please you to speak to the laddie here, Maister Dods?" asks Tibbie, who has finished her toilette, and is now clothed and in her right mind. "He says Joanna Rae is deeing."

"It is just a special providence the minister is at hame, is it no?" drawls Rattray.

"Does she want me immediately?"

"Immediate," is the reply. "The doctor has given her up, and she has all the glen-side in her cottage helping her to dee canny."

"She has often had these turns—I have no doubt she will soon be well again."

“Nae prospect of it,” answers the boy, with the gusto the young have in relating any terrible calamity.

“To-morrow will do, I daresay.”

“She will be deid afore the morn.”

The minister is a thoroughly kind-hearted man, and, in general, gives more substantial help than empty advice to the poor of his parish. At the present moment he is between two fires—the fire of it being his marriage day, the day he had hoped to spend in peace and quiet with Thyrza, and the fire of his duty to his flock. Of course, he ought not to hesitate for a single moment which to choose. But for all that, he does hesitate; he—a minister of the Presbyterian kirk, a man subject to the rigour and severity of the General Assembly—hesitates, and swerves from the straight and narrow path of duty, to follow the broad, pleasant road of his inclinations.

“Bother the old woman!” he exclaims. “She is always having these turns, and does not die when done. Let us have some dinner, Tibbie, and Mrs. Dods and I will think the matter over.”

“Ye will get nae denner frae me,” rejoins Tibbie.

“Why not?” asks Thyrza, with dignity.

“Dear bluss me! things are no done wi’ looking at. There is naething in the manse tae

eat. We did not expect you, and sae there is naething provided."

"Is there not even a bit of cold mutton?" inquires Mr. Dods, at his wits' ends.

"The penters and me hae just had twa or kail broth, and some potatoes tae our denners. We're twelve miles frae a butcher's shop, sae how wad we get mutton tae cook?"

"But are there not some remains of that admirable ham sent me by the Miss Tods? You could fry some slices of it, and they would be savoury eating with the addition of some eggs."

"Sae they would, and they wad fry fine and canny in the muckle frying-pan."

"Then by all means begin."

"But there is nae ham. Ye canna expect things tae last for ever, and Tammis and me we finished the ham the day you gae tae Queensmuir."

"Dear me!" ejaculates Mr. Dods. "Dear me."

"Are there no eggs?" asks Thyrza. "Some tea and bread-and-butter and eggs would be better than nothing."

"There are nae eggs," replies Tibbie, folding her arms across her stomach. "It's no possible that hens can lay a' the year roond. The hens are all moulting noo, and it's fine laying beasts

they hae been, but even Carry, that's the finest laying beastie I ever saw, has scarce a feather upon her blessed body, and she hasna had ane in her tail this week past and mair. They canna lay, puir beasts, when they are moulting."

"There must be some bread and butter," persists Thyrsa.

"There is naething in the hoose until I bake oat cakes," answers Tibbie, with grave emphasis.

Mr. Dods is very hungry, and he is also disappointed. What with the chaotic condition of the house, the half-cleaned rooms, the smell of paint and soot, the want of dinner, and his exceeding hunger, and the additional aggravation of the inopportune illness of the old woman in the glen, he is in that vexed, irritated state, which in women finds vent in tears. In a domestic crisis the man is seldom the one to take the lead. Mr. Dods is utterly at sea. He is unused to being put out of his ordinary jog-trot routine, and he is excessively put out just now.

The necessity for prompt action of some kind rouses Thyrsa from the dreamy condition in which she has been since the ball. She looks at Tibbie, rather rejoiced than otherwise at the prospect of having a tug for the mastery, and determines that she will conquer her, and Tibbie

looks at her new mistress, thinking she will soon vanquish that midge of a girl.

"We must not be unreasonable, Mr. Dods," she says, "Tibbie did not expect us. Our only resource is to ask Mrs. Ferrier to take us in. The house is too damp for us to remain here."

"There is just Mistress Ferrier at hame," adds Rattray, "the laird is out shooting, and Mistress Napier is awa' staying wi' thae twa auld deaf bodies, Lord and Lady George Boggs."

"And about that plaguy sick person?" asks Mr. Dods. "To go or not to go, that is the question."

"When you have had some dinner you will see the world more *couleur de rose*. I have not lived at Lillieshill without noticing how much happier Mr. Lefroy was after dinner than before it. Duty before pleasure though for ministers, ministers' wives and relations. You must go to the old woman. It would be wrong to neglect your religious duties merely because you are married, and this is our wedding day——."

A speech which ought to convince Mr. Dods that in the heart of the girl he had wedded there is not a spark of love for him, and that all he can hope for is an ordinary friendship. She has mentioned no sorrow at passing the first evening of their married life apart ; has not even begged

him to return as soon as possible. And she knows she has only to express the slightest wish on the subject for Mr. Dods to cast all respect for the Kirk Session and the General Assembly to the winds, and he will leave the old woman to take care of herself. Thyrsa would not be made of mortal flesh and blood, certainly not of feminine flesh and blood, did she not know her power over the erudite scholar, accomplished theologian and antiquarian, the elderly minister of Carmylie—her husband. Since the morning she had learnt that her least expression approaching to affection can make this big man—the minister is of no meagre stature or slight build—thrill with delight; that her most trivial ailment fills him with anxiety, and that, in a word, she is his queen. No queen of beauty of old time was ever more loyally worshipped by her true knight than is Thyrsa by the Rev. James Dods. Love is not a half-and-half affair with him. He goes at it with the impetus of the Bogg over its brown peaty bed. He loves as a Scotchman loves when a Scotchman really does love, with a slow intense fire which will only cease when the breath is out of his body and his bones are crumbled into dust, and Thyrsa in return gives him only a tolerant kind of friendship. Well, there are plenty of such bargains in the world,

bargains in which the one gives his heart's best gold, and the other gilded dross, perhaps not even taking the trouble to have the dross gilded. The arrangement into which the minister and Thyrsa have entered is as far from being the first of its kind as it is from being the last which will be made. It by no means follows that the object adored is perfection. The women for whom men have lost life and home and honour were not always the best of women, and the men for whom women have given all have not always been the most noble or generous of their species. There is always *l'un qui baise*. Perhaps this is divinely ordained. Sinners make saints, and tyrants often call forth acts of magnificent self-devotion and fidelity. If there had been no persecution where would have been the saints and their heroic deeds? So it may be that the publicans and sinners have their use in the world.

It is a trite saying that human nature is human nature all over the globe, be the nation French, English, or Scotch; and one of Thyrsa's attractions to Mr. Dods has been her unwillingness to marry him. Had she been ready at a moment's bidding, half her fascination would have fled. We invariably desire those things we have not got; we long for that which seems difficult to obtain. Distance often lends enchantment to

the view. So we endeavour to get nearer. If the mountain won't come to Mahomet, why, Mahomet must go to the mountain. Even Thyrsa's unconcealed shrinking from him acted as a sort of motive to draw Mr. Dods towards her. To repel was, in her case, to attract. Positive beauty she has not; picturesque-looking she is, and she has the gift—the odd, inexplicable gift—of charming men—a gift better than any amount of classic beauty; one, however, which she is yet unconscious of possessing.

“It is very hard, Thyrsa,” says Mr. Dods, having left Rattray and Tibbie perfectly happy, with a glass of whisky apiece, in which to drink the healths of the bride and bridegroom; “it is very hard that on this day, to which I have looked forward with such pleasure, I have to leave you.”

They have gone out into the old-fashioned garden. The bees, sated with honey, have hummed themselves to sleep under the warm, homely straw bee-skeps or hives, placed in a cosy bield, under a tumbledown wall dividing the manse garden from the steep street. The crimson clove carnations in the heart-shaped beds and the China roses clustering lovingly with their sweet pink flowers against the manse give out their fragrance on the air, full of scents, still and warm as in the heat of Midsummer. In the

gloaming, the firelight shines out ruddy upon the street and the little pools of water left by a shower on the preceding night. The sea looks dull and dark. The revolving lamp of the lighthouse at the head of the bar turns its crimson signal landwards. The knot of men have dispersed within their cottages, and the sailor and the bare-footed girl have separated, she to dream of what she will do when he comes home a rich man, and he to the shop to buy some pigtail tobacco.

“It is very hard,” repeats Mr. Dods.

“It is very hard,” answers Thyrza, looking at a monumental tablet gleaming white from among the headstones and mounds in the kirkyard; “but there are many hard things in this life. There is no wonder there is a heaven in which the crooked places shall be made straight.” And she sighs, thinking how Ferrier and she, only a fortnight ago, walked over the very road she and her husband are now traversing, and the moon hung over the waters like a glory of fire. There is neither moon nor stars to-night, of which she is glad. Can it be only a fortnight ago? It must be an eternity instead of fourteen short days. She feels again Ferrier’s kisses on her lips, as she sat in the garret with him on the floor among the dust and cobwebs and spiders

and slaters, and the rain pattered and dripped over the old roof of Carmylie and the weather-worn eaves of the grim grey houses. She hears again Ferrier's deep tender tones, whispering into her ear that he loved her. It was the happiest, the most delicious hour of her existence. It seems as though Fate had taken her at her word, and given her one brief unalloyed hour of perfect happiness for which she is to pay for the whole of her future.

"Don't, Mr. Dods," she exclaims, hotly, impetuously, pushing the minister from her, as under cover of the absence of idlers in the street and the gathering darkness, he ventures to steal his arm round her waist and to kiss her; "if you knew how I hate you when you kiss me you would not do it. I abhor kissing. I think it is a terrible invention. We can like each other quite as well without any demonstration of that kind."

The minister, pained and hurt by her repulse in the very depths of his soul, is silent.

"Oh, I did not mean to be unkind," she cries, hastily, smitten with a sense of her injustice. Mr. Dods could not help Ferrier's defection. It was not his fault Ferrier broke off the engagement in so rude and abrupt a manner. It was her fault in some way. Her charms were too

poor to retain his love ; but he had not taken long to tire of her ; he was soon wearied. " Mr. Dods, as you think so much about it, and it gives you pleasure," very shyly, and speaking very rapidly, " I will kiss you."

She put her arms about him, and standing on tiptoe, kisses his cheek.

" Thank you," he says, much as he had said " Thank you" when he read " Yes" in the letters through which he had proposed, " but that was only a half one. Still a half kiss is better than none. I do think a great deal about it. It grieved me to hear you say you hated me. I hope, dear, it was an over statement?"

" Mr. Dods ! Mr. Dods ! oh, look at the lightning," she rejoins, clinging to him. " Is it going to be a storm?"

" I think it will."

" What makes you think so?"

" It has all the appearance of it."

" Will it be a *bad* storm?"

" It is not improbable."

" *Very bad*?"

" Wee-ll, yes ; I should not be surprised if it were very bad."

" Oh, Mr. Dods, don't go to the old woman to-night. We won't go to Carmylie. Let us stay at the manse. I can sleep anywhere, any-

how. I don't mind. Tibbie will let me have a shakedown in the kitchen, and you can have the sofa in the dining-room. I'll give you half a dozen kisses if you will, as you like them."

"It is a very tempting bribe. Let me have them first, and then I will promise afterwards."

"No, no; fair play. You must not take advantage of my fear. *Why* is it going to be a storm?"

"Owing to the pressure of electricity."

"I don't care about the science. Mr. Dods, will you stay with me to-night?"

"The old woman has thought fit to be ill on a most inconvenient day, and the inconvenience may not stop here. If she dies she may want me to bury her, as her people were all buried by either my father or myself."

"In this kirkyard?" glancing across at the dim dark rows of irregular tombstones and mounds of divers lengths, dark and dim in the deepening twilight, while beyond lies the grey shadowy sea.

"Yes, in this kirkyard."

"Mr. Dods, you will stay with me?"

"I am coming to that, Thyrza dear. The point is, if she dies, and wishes me to conduct

the funeral service, it will delay our journey west. I am beginning to think there was something unlucky in not having my wedding coat. I will stay with you, but we must go to Carmylie. The manse is not fit for you."

"Then let us go at once, but it will be best for you to see the old woman. Should she die I should feel I had been very selfish in keeping you."

"Perhaps you are right," says he, reluctantly, with a sense she is more self-denying than he could have wished her to be; yet she has expressed a desire that he should be with her, which is more encouraging than that shudder and shrinking away of the morning.

"But she lives a long way up the glen, and you may be *struck* by the lightning."

"Of that I am not afraid. The time of every one's death, and of my death, is known to the Almighty. When that time comes I shall die, not before. If I am destined to be killed by lightning on or from my way to Joanna Rea's cottage I shall be killed, and no human power can rescue me; but if my hour is not yet come, then let the storm rage as it likes, it cannot hurt me."

"Mr. Dods, I am *frightened*. If we were only at Carmylie!"

“I never thought anything about a thunderstorm before,” he rejoins, with a smile, unseen by Thyrza in the darkness, “excepting as an atmospheric phenomenon varying in severity from the amount of electricity contained in the clouds, but from henceforth I shall look back upon this thunderstorm as a peculiarly blessed one, the one to which I owe the unspeakable happiness of hearing you say you wish to be with me. We will go to Carmylie before the storm gets worse. I think it will be several hours before it reaches its full height.”





CHAPTER VII.

SOME hours have passed since Mr. Dods and Thyrsa reached Carmylie House. Since then the minister has dined and is riding up the glen on his way to visit the sick woman, while Thyrsa has gone to bed in the room she formerly occupied, which contains the large antique wardrobe.

Ferrier has not yet returned from his day's shooting, and Mrs. Ferrier sitting alone in his study is beginning to feel nervous on account of his prolonged absence.

Jack's study has been used as Mrs. Ferrier's boudoir since Charity and the visitors quitted Carmylie. It is much snugger and more habitable than the great dining and drawing-rooms. Although the evening is warm and even muggy there is a fire of wood and peat burning on the brass dogs. A fire is always more companionable than the blank space of empty grate. The red cinders and yellow flames look cheerful and

there is something pleasant in the sputtering of the resin in a fir branch, and the sing-song of the fire spirit droning away as the wood is consumed and reduced to grey charred ashes.

As time goes on without bringing Ferrier, his mother grows still more nervous. A creepy feeling steals over her which she tries to shake off, but in vain. She endeavours to read and cannot fix her attention on the book or follow out two consecutive sentences. She sews a little, and takes a homœopathic globule with some of which she has doctored Thyrza. She walks up and down the room, then sits down again. The least thing startles her. Her work falls on the ground, and she jumps up from her chair. The clock striking eleven with slow regularity, like a heavy funeral knell, makes her almost scream and stop her ears. Beyond a kind of rumbling noise of thunder gradually approaching nearer and becoming louder and more frequent, and the tick, tick, tick, tick of the clock, the house is silent as the grave.

Unable to work or read, Mrs. Ferrier stirs the fire and starts violently as a piece of peat slips lower down in the grate. Do what she will, she cannot prevent herself from thinking of all manner of horrible things. She recollects the ghost stories connected with Carmylie, and almost ex-

pects to hear the swish and rustle of the Green Lady's gown or the tread of the old laird in the passage. She would go to the kitchen where Rattray and Cecilia are awaiting Jack's arrival, but she dares not walk through the mazes of the long dark passages by herself, and there is no bell communicating from the study to the lower regions, Davie having destroyed it long ago, otherwise she would ring it to summon them.

Then, a dreadful murder committed in Ireland in a lonely mountain district near the seacoast, not unlike Carmylie, occurs to her, with each revolting detail rendered more vivid by memory and her present state of nervousness. She recalls too, those strange footsteps she has heard so distinctly walking over her bedroom ceiling in the dead of the night for several days past. Why does not Jack come? What can have prevented him? Is it possible that some accident has happened? And if so, what sort of accident? He was never so long before in coming home. It is very unlike Ferrier's usual conduct, too. He is invariably so thoughtful and considerate where the feelings and comfort of his mother are concerned, that something exceedingly out of the way must have occurred.

“ Oh, mem, please, mem, what shall we do?”

screams Cecilia, flinging the study door open abruptly with a violence which brings a large volume of smoke out of the grate, and bursting into the room head foremost. "There's been a great big man in the kitchen. He maun hae come tae murder us all in our beds, and us sic decent respectable peaceable bodies that wadna hae harmed the heid o' a flea, and the laird is no at home."

"A man !" gasps Mrs. Ferrier, turning very white. "What was he like?"

"The Lord only kens for I dinna," replies Cecilia. "I was that frightened I couldna look at him."

"A man in the house !" says Ferrier, walking into the room, his gun in his hand, and the slouch hat on his head which has been his faithful companion in many a shooting expedition abroad. He instantly takes off his hat on seeing Mrs. Ferrier.

"Oh, so you have come at last, Jack," she cries, with as much delight in voice and face as though it were her lover, instead of her son.

"I hope you have not been alarmed at my being so late. The truth is the four-wheel dogcart had a mishap coming down a brae, and the pole broke. We had to go out of our way to get it mended. The blacksmith was the slowest fellow about his

work that I ever saw, but after some bother, he finished it. You did not wait dinner for me?"

"No, because you told me you would see what you could have at the farmhouse."

"What did I hear Cecilia say? Something about a man being in the house?"

"A great muckle man went through the kitchen this very meenit, when Rattray and I were sitting into the fire."

"Why did not Rattray turn him out? This comes of being away from home. Something is sure to happen."

"I wadna let him," answers Cecilia. "He micht hae been hurt and then fat wad I hae dune, and me that distrackit aboot him yet, though we hae been married ten year come Yule, that when he gaed into Queensmuir tae work at the loom, I stood at the top o' the lang brae and watched him ganging doon the water-side, and grat like a bairn when I couldna see him nae mair."

"It is such an improbable thing that any one should think of robbing Carmylie. We are quite out of the reach of the swell mob."

"Oh dear, Jack! I wish you would look. There was a gang of gipsies in the village yesterday. Some of them came here to beg, and they may be hidden in some of the outhouses to steal the poultry."

"Perhaps they are in the garret now," says Ferrier, laughing. "My dear mother, reassured no one would take the trouble of coming to pillage Carmylie."

"I do not know that. This is such a lonely place, and last week I heard the death-watch ticking in my bedroom, not to speak of the footsteps I am certain were in the attic."

"There is no one in the house excepting ourselves, but if you like, I will look through the garret. It would be a splendid place for any amount of burglars to hide themselves in."

Ferrier lights a small lantern used for the purpose of going down to the wine-cellar, and Cecilia calls Rattray from the kitchen. He appears armed with the poker and tongs, formidable weapons of warfare. Mrs. Ferrier refuses to be left in the study by herself, and taking Jack's arm, accompanies him up the narrow winding garret stair.

Gow has delayed his meditated attack on Ferrier until he has collected as much silver as, sold at the pawnbroker's price, will pay his passage to America, and supply him with money to keep him in comfort until he finds employment. To the shieling in the wood, near the peat moss, he has conveyed by degrees silver spoons, forks, silver salt-cellars, apostle-spoons, to the value of

about twelve or fourteen pounds. These articles he has removed in the dusk of evening, and covered up in a corner of the shieling with moss and fir branches. He had returned from a journey of this description, when, to the horror of Cecilia and Rattray, he walked through the kitchen, and he now hears the sound of Ferrier approaching the garret. As he is in the middle of enjoying the remains of a succulent venison pasty for his supper, he is not over pleased at being disturbed. But it is no part of his plan to encounter Ferrier hand to hand, nor when he can be assisted by the aid of Rattray; so, as Ferrier enters the garret by the stairs, Gow crawls on his knees over the rafters to the trap-door, from thence down to the kitchen, scarcely able to forbear from a hearty laugh at the expense of his baffled pursuers.

He does not like the look of the night outside, which is black as a wolf's throat, and taking off his boots—heavy, clumsy, nailed ones—he goes upstairs, and turns in at the first bedroom door which comes handy. This chances to be the room in which Thyrza is sleeping. The large wardrobe is on the left-hand side of the door which opens on the right, so that when the door is wide open, the wardrobe is behind it, and in great measure effectually screened by it.

Ferrier, having attached no importance to Mrs. Ferrier's fears, merely gives a cursory glance round the attic, or else he might have seen a pie-dish, containing the relics of some venison, a knife and fork, and a short cutty pipe filled with his best cavendish lying on the floor. The lantern only illuminates the immediate neighbourhood, its little puny light being lost in the darkness which conceals the underhung corners of the garret. A mouse scuttles across the bare boards, and is hidden among the gloom in the old boxes and chests. The spiders, from their cobwebs, much surprised at the sight of nocturnal visitors with a lantern, retire into the recesses of the wood-work.

Ferrier walks from end to end of the place, that is, as far as the flooring extends ; and holding the lantern high up, flashes it hither and thither, to throw a light to the other side. The trap-door by which Gow descended to the secret stairs cut out of the thickness of the wall is unfastened, but Ferrier, knowing nothing of the plan of Carmylie beyond that the tunnel over which the house is built, where the Jacobites had taken refuge, makes a good wine-cellar, does not think there is anything peculiar in this fact.

"There is no one here, mother," he says. "I did not expect to find any one either ! Your

eyes must have deceived you, Cecilia. You and Rattray, sitting opposite to each other by the kitchen fire, fell asleep and dreamed a dream! Was not that it?"

"As sure as daith, and gin it were the last word I ever spake, and it's telling the truth I am and no lees, Rattray and I baith saw a man."

"I don't wonder you were astonished," returns Ferrier, "to see a man in this uninhabited district is to see a novelty. Perhaps it was the ghost of the old laird, the one you know who cut his throat up here; and if you look very carefully you may still see the marks of the blood on the floor. Don't you think this is it, Cecilia?"

"How can you joke on such a subject, Jack?" reproaches Mrs. Ferrier.

"I believe you are disappointed, mother, that there is no burglar. Come out of that!" he shouts, and the dark vaulted, low, overhanging pent-house roof echoes back a gurgling answer, at which Mrs. Ferrier shrieks.

"There is nothing, mother. The place has a fusty smell, a smell of cobwebs. Oh, what a whopper of a spider! I should say that chap was a great, great, great grandfather. Shall we go down?"

“ Yes, I think we will.”

“ You are still incredulous,” says Ferrier, “ but with a little trouble you can imagine anything. I assure you that you can. This is the very house, too, for conjuring up spirits. I once knew a fellow who could fancy he saw scores of ghosts. But it was owing to his bad digestion.”

“ What do you think the man was like, Rattray ?” asks Mrs. Ferrier, as they go down the corkscrew stairs again.

“ Aweel, it is my opinion he resembled Gow ; however, there is nae doot he is oot o’ the hoose, for deil a man or woman either is there in the garret.”

“ Now, mother, you had better go to bed. You are as pale as death. You worked yourself up to a pitch of nervous excitement with being alone, and the darkness, and my non-return. To-morrow you will laugh at your nervousness. I daresay the electricity has something to do with it.”

“ Probably it has,” she admits, smiling ; “ Rattray, shut the garret door.”

Rattray closes it with a bang, which bang Gow hears, and chuckles to himself. He has got into the wardrobe and drawn the doors to, just enough to give him plenty of air. Should any one come to disturb him he is ready for

them. A desperate man with a good sharp knife, well-tempered, and well-sharpened, is a match for Ferrier and an old fellow like Rattray, and Gow is resolved not to go back to prison fare and prison discipline at Middleby without having a fair fight for it first.

“Jack, don’t go to bed yet,” pleads Mrs. Ferrier, “here is a brandy-and-soda, and your pipe, and a good fire for you.”

“Well, to please you, I will sit up as long as I can keep awake, upon the express condition that you do not stay here another instant. But what with the hill air, and the heat of that fire, and my own bodily fatigue with so many miles walking on the heather, I feel ready to drop asleep on my feet.”

“Shall I leave you Wasp?”

“No, take the little beggar to your room; he will only howl when you have gone.”

“I wadna say but that the hail (whole) affair was naething but a hallucination of Sawten’s,” observes Cecilia, who dearly loves a fine word when she can drag it into conversation, and she retreats from the study to give Mrs. Ferrier some help in retiring to rest.



CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Mrs. Ferrier has left Jack alone, he goes to his study window to watch the storm which has been hanging about all day, and now bursts in fury upon Carmylie and the surrounding district.

It is a wonderful sight. The heavens are at play. Every minute flashes of lightning dart from one cloud to another and scud along the sky, appearing to assume in their transit the forms of serpentine curves of fire and luminous meteors. Each flash lights up the strath, the fastnesses of the mountain passes, the pike pools at the Loch, the quaggy earth and cuttings in the peat moss, the foam of the breakers on the sand-bar, and the depths of the pine-woods. A crash of thunder. Then all is darkness. The wind parts the clouds for an instant. The stars shone through the opening, and the trunk of the pine-trees glimmer like grim teeth on the pale

horizon, and the next moment the lightning blazes out and the blackness of night seeming as though it could be touched, falls like a funeral pall.

Had Ferrier's eyes been sufficiently large and strong enough for the purpose, he could have seen at every illumination the tints on the wings of the terrified birds crouched under the tree branches for protection ; every separate dead heather blossom ; the varieties of scarlet and orange-coloured toadstools ; the gradations of shape in the golden and russet-withered beech leaves ; the rounded billows of clouds in the firmament ; the red tiles on the kirk roof ; the moulding of the stones at the manse ; the epitaphs on the graves ; the divisions between the planks of the boats lying high and dry on the yellow sands—for all these minutiae are rendered instantaneously clear and vivid by the dazzling reflection of the lightning.

After watching until he is almost blinded, Ferrier turns away and, going to the fireside, seats himself in a large crimson morocco arm-chair. He lights a cigar, partakes of a brandy-and-soda, and selecting a comfortable footstool on which to rest his feet, despite the tremendous peals of thunder and sundry struggles with his sleepiness, he finally succumbs to his weariness,

combined with the warmth of the fire, and sinks into a profound sleep.

It is between one and two o'clock in the morning.

Thyrza has been roused once or twice by the ever-growing-nearer rolling noise of the thunder. At the *pension* she has been accustomed to peculiar scrapings and rushings of feet from the rats. She is familiar with creakings from the old doors which swung gratingly to and fro on their hinges and indescribable squeaks, and rustles, and patterings, invariably set down by Miss Holt to contrary draughts in the chimneys. Being very drowsy she does not disturb herself when Gow comes into the room, or even when he gets into the wardrobe. But by-and-by, the thunder becomes too deafeningly loud for her to sleep again. At first she tries hard to shut out the lightning and thunder by burying her head underneath the bedclothes, and stopping her ears with her fingers. Finding it stifflingly hot this sultry night, she endeavours once more to court back the fickle dame—sleep. She tosses restlessly from side to side, shakes up the pillow, changes her position, repeats prayers and quantities of poetry, goes over the multiplication-table, all without being able to recall the capricious goddess. She resigns herself to circum-

stances and lies awake, counting the flashes and wondering how the minister got up the glen to the sick woman's house. She has been thus employed some time, when a peculiar sound as of a person fumbling and fidgeting with the door handle, intending to enter quietly, makes her sit bolt upright in bed and say—

“Who is there?”

No reply coming in answer to her question, she fancies she must have been mistaken, and lies down again to resume her former occupation. The odd click or fumbling being repeated, causes her to call again—

“Who is there?”

The wind suddenly sinks; there is a great, an awful calm. Then the room, the pictures on the walls, the carved wardrobe, the mirror, the toilette table, the two straight narrow windows, are as one sheet of flame, being lit up by blue jagged flashes of lightning, followed simultaneously, with no space for breathing between, by terrific claps of thunder rattling like the discharge of millions of artillery, reverberating, echoing from mountain to mountain, sinking in angry hoarse murmurs among the gorges and ravines with muttered growls of defiance.

In the brief gleam of lurid light, Thyrza perceives the wardrobe doors are thrown widely open, and standing on the threshold is a man

whose face, marked with the small-pox, she vaguely recognises as belonging to the poacher Gow, whom Ferrier captured in the Chapelton wood. She tries to look again; but the darkness is blank, utterly impenetrable—a thick gloom that can almost be seen and felt.

Thyrza lies trembling with terror, and dares not move either hand or foot. She is too frightened to scream, and her tongue seems frozen to the roof of her mouth. Another vivid flash, apparently dancing round her pillow in yellow jets, allows her to see that the man, whoever he was, has gone. But where has he gone? Has he come to rob the house or to murder some one? And who can the some one be? Is it possible the some one can be Ferrier? This idea is no sooner presented to her mind than she rises and gropes about for some clothing although her limbs tremble and shake under her.

She does not stop to think or to reflect what to do, or how she will do it. She only knows whatever happens to herself and whatever it may cost her, Ferrier must be warned. Such women as Thyrza never do stop to reflect. It would be better for them if they did. Acting by intuition and impulse is pleasanter in theory than in practice, especially in the consequences that sometimes ensue.

Thyrza has divined Gow's intentions in a moment. A shudder passes over her as she recalls the malignant expression in the poacher's eyes, and she is in an agony of apprehension while feeling for her dressing-gown lest she should stumble up against him, as for aught she knows or is able to see, he may be still concealed somewhere in the room.

She throws on several petticoats, and without waiting to search for slippers, moves out into the passage with her bare feet. She is compelled to feel her way, an occasional flash only breaking the profound darkness, and serving to guide her steps along the corridor.

As yet no rain has fallen, and between the thunderclaps there is a stillness like that of death.

Thyrza steers her course in the direction of Ferrier's room. She goes as if blindfolded, and is distracted by the notion that even before she gets to Ferrier, Gow may have attacked him and her aid be useless. She is very cold and shivers, her feet being chilly from their contact with the smooth oak floor.

A light strikes ruddy and warm upon the lintel of a door half unclosed.

Thyrza has mistaken her way, and this is Ferrier's study.

“Monsieur,” she says, “Monsieur, waken.”

Ferrier, being sound asleep, does not answer. He is lying in a half-recumbent position in the depths of the arm-chair. The crimson morocco shows off to full advantage the massive head set on a well proportioned throat; the thick crop of iron-grey locks, the rugged bronzed features, the long eyelashes casting a shade on his dark cheek, and his muscular sinewy frame. The firelight flickers, sending little gleams on the blue hangings of the room, the oak fittings, the tawny tiger skin, on Ferrier's shooting suit of striped heathery brown velvet, of a peculiarly strong material made for him in China after his adventure on the hills there among the under-scrub. He is not a handsome man, he has no particular gifts or talents, he is not very religious, from simply never having thought about religion; his virtues are those of the old heathens of Greece and Rome, honour regulating his actions and life; yet such as he is, good and bad mixed together, with aspirations after what is noblest and highest, with inclinations often leading him downwards, as they will lead men possessed of deep and violent passions, to Thyrza he constitutes her soul's delight.

“Monsieur,” she says again, venturing to shake his arm.

This time he moves a little, but he is still heavy with sleep, and he only gives a sort of grunt.

“Monsieur ! waken, waken quickly !” she cries, passing her hand over his face as the surest means of waking him.

“What the—why the—who is here ?” he exclaims, opening his eyes, scarcely able to credit his senses in seeing a woman bending over him, and recognising Thyrza from the musical tones of her voice.

“It is I—Thyrza,” she goes on rapidly, he looking very intently all the while at her, and thinking he surely could not have known how pretty she is. He thinks he has never seen her prettier than now in her dressing-jacket and the petticoat of her “costume,” her bare feet like two pearls peeping from beneath her dress, her hair knotted loosely round her head in one big untidy twist, and her eyes bright and soft. “Monsieur, Gow is here. I saw him in one of those flashes of lightning standing at my bedroom door. He had a knife in his hand, and I do think that he came to kill you.”

“And mademoiselle took the trouble of coming to warn me. When I consider all things I am at a loss to understand your care for me. How

did you get to Carmylie? Are you not married to——?”

“Hush! I hear Gow coming!” exclaims Thyrsa, and blowing out the lamp she drags Ferrier into the passage just in time to avoid Gow. He tramples past them into the study, Ferrier and Thyrsa holding their very breaths as he passes. Unconsciously Ferrier places his boot on Thyrsa’s unslipped foot, but although it causes her excruciating pain, she neither flinches nor gives a single groan. They listen to Gow moving within the study; the fire burning in the grate, the lamp still smoking, and Ferrier’s pipe yet lit and smouldering, show that the room has been very lately tenanted. A smothered oath of disappointment escapes from the lips of Gow.

“The bird is flown!” he says aloud to himself, taking an intense satisfaction in breaking to atoms a choice meerschaum Ferrier has been years in colouring. Were not Thyrsa with him Ferrier could not restrain himself from rushing at Gow and knocking him down, but as she is he considers it his duty to provide for her safety first. There may be other men in the house besides Gow, and it makes Ferrier’s blood curdle when he thinks that the unprotected girl has run the peril of walking along the passages in the

dark to warn him of his danger, while Gow was wandering about, so he retreats some steps further away from the study. Thyrsa is quivering with excitement, and scarcely feels the pain of her bruised foot.

“Go up the narrow stairs,” she whispers, “and take off your boots. Wait for me there. I shall be back with Rattray in five minutes, and Cecilia will rouse Mr. Burnet at Carmylie Mains. No person can be asleep during this deafening thunder.”

She detaches herself from Ferrier and has gone down the stone stairs leading to the lower regions of the kitchen, &c., before he has time to remonstrate.

Ferrier goes up the tortuous steps communicating with the most ancient part of the house. In former days it had been defended by one man against a tremendous odds. He only yielded when his sword arm was so weary it could no longer wield the blade, and the stairs were dripping with blood.

Gow has been to the dining-room and lights a taper lying on the mantelpiece. He rolls the punch-bowl and a silver claret jug in his handkerchief. His removal of his spoil has been gradual in order to excite no suspicion by a large quantity of plate being missing at once. The

sideboard being unlocked now the family is at home, he drinks three or four wineglasses of raw brandy, one after another. He is not exactly drunk, but has just had enough liquor to rouse the latent fiend in him, inflame his innate brutality, and make him dangerous. His little eyes twinkle ominously as he feels the sharp blade of the thin mischievous-looking knife he abstracted from his cottage on the night after his escape from Middleby. He is aware that he could go out with his booty in perfect safety, but sheer bravado and the fiery liquor he has so recently imbibed cause him to swagger through the upper passages instead of the lower ones. Turning round a corner of the corridor sharply to the narrow stairs he knocks up against Ferrier, and attacking him from behind brings him to the ground with a blow from the iron cleek which supplies the loss of his left hand. The sudden shock and violence of the stroke almost stun Ferrier and deprive him of power to move for the moment. Gow stretches his colossal bulk on his chest so that it is impossible for Jack to rise, and he is overmatched and helpless as a mummy in its swathing bandages.

“Let go, you scoundrel!” exclaims Ferrier, when his senses clear themselves a little, and he makes an ineffectual effort to free himself by

wrestling with all his strength against Gow, who endeavours to grasp him by the throat with his cleek. Ferrier manages to hit him a blow between the eyes, making him see a considerable number of stars, and then the two men roll over and over, their limbs linked one within the other. It is no mere struggle for the mastery of a prize, or the supremacy of bone, muscle, or sinew, it is a contest which to one will end in either death or life. Gow's blood and passions are alike boiling and maddened by the brandy and by his infuriated lust for blood, the thirst to take life sometimes kindled in men of his surly temper and disposition when excited by revenge. He has the advantage over Ferrier in being the aggressor, and having in the first instance got him under him. Ferrier feels he cannot hold out much longer, he must give in sooner or later. He grows faint and weak, and makes another desperate attempt, but Gow foils him by pinning his throat to the ground with his cleek, which he can now use as adroitly as though it were a hand.

Ferrier's moments seem numbered. Life is very sweet when its sands are being shaken out and his days are drawing to an end as a tale that is told ; very sweet to him, even though he is burdened and hampered by the fetters of debts :

very sweet to him even though deserted by the girl whom he had worshipped as the incarnation of womanly perfection ; life is very sweet to him when it is going to end by the knife of a low blackguard who will slay him as a butcher slays a sheep.

“ Don’t cut my throat, it makes a fellow look so bad afterwards,” he says at last, seeing Gow produce the thin sharp knife from the leg of his stocking.

If he must die he will die hard. He sets his teeth tightly together as he did when a lad at school, and wrestles with all his remaining strength. But he is exhausted by his struggles and his head swims round from the effect of the blow which felled him to the ground. He can hardly breathe ; a deadly sickness overpowers him ; his senses forsake him, and his eyes grow dim. He ceases to wrestle and lies as if dead at the complete and absolute mercy of the poacher.

“ D——n you !” rejoins Gow through his teeth, with the nearest approach to respect he has ever yet felt for human being, “ I’ll do for you though I have to swing for it.”

He raises his hand to strike. At that very instant there comes a fearful flash of lightning, and close on its heels such an awful peal of thunder that the very heavens seem to open and

shut with its violence, and the foundations of the house totter and shake.

Gow has paused, not because of the thunder, but because of his cleek which, still fixed on Ferrier's throat, is in his way. He removes it and is bringing down the knife with terrible force when Thyrsa, finding it hopeless to bestir Rattray and Cecilia, flies up the stairs, and bounding along to Ferrier, throws her arms round his neck just in time to turn aside the blade, so that the blow, instead of injuring any one, spends its force in the thin air. The light of the taper flaring and burning where Gow let it fall, throws her pale face and slight figure into strong relief against the darkness of the passage and ceiling, the great shoulders and small-pox-marked visage of Gow, and the resolute features of Ferrier.

Gow rises, thinking Thyrsa is the harbinger of further aid or she would not have dared to come alone. He picks up his bundle of silver and makes off out of the house through the wild dashing torrents of rain, now beginning to fall like an Indian tornado, towards the shieling in the Chapelton wood, whence he will go to Middleby.

Thyrsa has sunk down on the stone steps when the danger was over, shaking and trembling

in every limb of her body. In the excitement she has been forgetful of everything but the necessity of rescuing Ferrier, and she is, constitutionally, neither brave nor strong-minded, consequently the reaction is all the greater, the strain on her nerves having been intense.

“My darling, my darling!” cries Ferrier, a few minutes afterwards, staggering slowly to his feet. “Thank God, you are safe! You have saved me from the worst kind of sore throat, but you might have been killed. I am not worthy that you should lose a single hair of your head for my sake.”

“I thought of nothing but your safety. What I did I should most likely have done for any one else under similar circumstances.”

Then, wholly overcome by an irresistible impulse of the moment, she says in a soft, low tone, “After all, I had but one life to give you, and it seemed worth dying for, if only once more to hear you call me darling.”





CHAPTER IX.

FERRIER, living at some distance from Queensmuir, has not heard any particulars of the fact of the marriage, to which he was not invited through the influence of his sister Mrs. Napier ; the consequence is that on seeing Thyrza again, and being ignorant of the minister's new arrangements, he has not a shadow of a doubt but that she has broken off her engagement with him and returned to perform her former duties as governess at Carmylie.

They are seated on the stone steps near the scene of Gow's attack. Thyrza is unable to move from sheer exhaustion.

"Then you loved me all the time," exclaims Ferrier, passionately, and clasping her in his arms.

For a moment she suffers herself to rest in his arms ; for a moment she yields to the storm of his kisses ; only for a moment though,

and then Ferrier remembering that she never liked this kind of thing, lets her go, on her intimating she wishes to be free.

“ Yes, I loved you all the time.” Then, leaning her head against the wall of the narrow staircase of rough, red, unpolished sandstone, unpainted and uncarpeted, she continues, “ You knew that I loved you, knew it without my telling you : but I have often wondered during the last fortnight how, after sending me such a message by Mrs. Napier as you did send on that Sunday evening, you can still expect me to be on the same terms as we were before—before our, I cannot call it an engagement, as it did not endure beyond a few hours.”

“ Message, what message ?”

“ The message you sent me by Mrs. Napier.”

“ I sent no message.”

“ Yes, you sent me a message by Mrs. Napier, a message which made me long to have been a man that I could have avenged myself.”

“ What was it ?”

“ I will never tell you, monsieur. You sent it, and you ought to know it without my repeating it. Besides, you have no right to ask me.”

“ I have a right to ask you,” he says, catching hold of her hands, “ I have every right to ask you, the right of your love and of my love, our

mutual loves. I *will* know if we stay here until these stones fall upon us. Whatever it was, you believed it and condemned me unheard and without a trial. The most guilty criminal has a trial. You did not even grant me that."

"I cannot look you in the face and say it."

"Oh, if that is all it is soon settled," he replies, blowing out the small taper lighted by Gow which is burning still on the steps. "We are in the dark now, you and I, Thyrza, my darling, do not be afraid to tell me. Have you forgotten that you promised me to be faithful even though the whole world swore against me?"

"I cannot tell you," she answers. "Yes, I promised you; but the promise is broken. You broke the promise; you were tired of me; so Mrs. Napier said."

"Think you are speaking to some one else, that will give you courage."

"You sent a message to me to say you wished the engagement to end, and that I was a bold, forward girl. That was the gist of the message."

"Did Charity tell you that? It is impossible, she is so fond of you, and never loses an opportunity of praising you to me."

"Fond of me! oh yes, she is fond of me!" repeats Thyrza. "Was there any wonder that I was angry and tried to hate you?"

“ Good heavens ! You forward ! ” he exclaims. “ But you might have known, darling, that no fellow calling himself a man would have sent a message like that. You might have guessed that I would not have done such a thing. Why did not you ask me about it ? ”

“ How could I ask you when you had said you did not want me ? ” she rejoins, sadly. “ Mrs. Napier would not let me go to you as I wished. She said it was not proper, for you were smoking with the other men. ”

“ I could wring Charity’s neck for her, ” says he, vindictively.

“ Now, you know how it all happened, and you can understand how indignant I was with you. I thought you had not been long in getting bored. ”

“ But it has all come right again, ” he answers, in the accents of tenderness which went straight to her heart in the garret on that wet Sunday afternoon. “ It is for me to sue for forgiveness from you, and you will forgive me, as you know I was innocent. If you have suffered, so have I ; but we must make the happiness of the future compensate for the misery of the past, and by Jove, I will have it out with Charity. ”

“ It can never come right, ” says she, with a long low, sobbing cry ; and though Ferrier cannot see her in the sombre darkness he knows her

tears are falling fast. "Oh, if I had but known a little—only a little sooner that it was a lie you did not love me."

"It can, it shall, it will come right," he replies, feeling in the gloom for her that he may draw her to him, "it has come right."

"It cannot," she returns, "for Mr. Dods and I were married at the Bank this morning."

"Married!" he cries, "good God! Then we are separated for ever, and just as my hopes were raised again they are dashed to the ground! Oh, Thyrsa, whatever possessed you to marry the minister?"

"I followed your advice. I was poor and I did the best for myself in marrying the first man—no, the second—who asked me, and I wanted to show you that I did not care for you."

"You have shown me that with a vengeance."

"Yet God has been very good to me."

"Good? You have odd notions of goodness."

"Yes, God has been good in letting me know you still love me."

"Yes, very good in letting us know how happy we might have been together, when it is exactly too late."

"Oh, monsieur, monsieur, let me be with you always."

"My darling, I have no claim over you now."

You are another man's wife," he says, recollecting himself with an effort, as he comprehends that this girl with her warmth and depth of feeling is devoted heart and soul to him, and that it lies with him to make or mar her future. Hers is the sort of disposition that under kind and genial treatment turns out splendid characters, generous, open, candid, but under coldness and severity, on the contrary, becomes hard, obdurate, and calculating, "what can I do? Sweet one, do not cry. You are only a little girl yet, and you will outlive your affection for me, and by-and-by you will wonder how you ever could have liked that surly grumpy fellow."

"I never shall," she sobs, and a soft little hand steals into his, "I shall never forget you, nor love any one but you."

"My darling, you must listen to me. The chances are that you have had a happy escape. I am not nearly so *nice* as you call it, as you think me; for my part, I don't believe the monsieur you like exists, excepting in your head. The Jack Ferrier whose life you have saved so nobly, and who does not know how he can ever repay you for it, is a nasty tempered man, not much good to himself or anybody else. Mr. Dods is better off than I am. He has a house

and position to give you, and I—what have I to offer in comparison?”

“I don’t want Mr. Dods, I don’t care for the house. What is the use of being comfortable when I have not got you?”

“Ah, if you’d had me you might have wished to change your mind. Little darling, don’t fret, promise me that you will not. Do you know that I had rather see you, as you are, the wife of Mr. Dods, happily settled in a snug home of your own, than I would see you my wife, sharing all my worries and bothers, and losing your youth and bloom while I could not provide you with those comforts and luxuries you require, and felt that it was my fault for bringing you into it. A man can weather anything, but a woman cannot. Knocking about soon tells on her. Do you see, darling?”

“No, I see nothing but that we might have been happy, and are not.”

“Do you really wish to make me miserable?” he asks, changing his tactics.

“No, no, a thousand times no.”

“Because if you do, you will fret and pine yourself to death; but if you want me to be reconciled to the hard lines Fate has dealt us you will try to be happy.”

“I cannot be happy without you,” she cries.

"You are not the only one that suffers, Thyrsa," enclosing her hand in his own broad palm as he speaks. "It breaks my heart to hear you cry, especially when it is all owing to *my* sister that this has happened. However, even had things gone as we hoped, it must have been a continual fight to make both ends meet. We must face the realities, and these realities will come easier to you when you have money to pave the rough places with. I have still my way to work, and I shall be better able to do it single-handed than as a married man. I thank heaven you have got a kind husband in Mr. Dods."

"I don't thank heaven at all, not at all," she replies with a great sob, brushing away her tears, "I am sure I could have helped you. I did with the big books, now, did I not? But I suppose we must live our lives, I wish mine was over."

"Ah, you are young. That is why you think of death as the cure for your first trouble," placing his arm round her waist, "I hope it is your last one, as well as your first. I shall never think of another, darling, as I have thought of you. I've always told you I did not know what love could be until I knew you."

“I shall never be happy again,” she says.

“Little darling, I trust you will be very happy. Why should your pure bright life be saddened? Won’t you give me a farewell kiss? I think even Mr. Dods would allow me to have one as the last out of the plenteous riches which have fallen to his lot, if he knew how cruelly we have both been deceived.”

He draws her close to him, his lips meet hers in one long kiss, and Thyrsa, remembering her light clothing and bare feet, leaves him alone on the stone stairs.





CHAPTER X.

I AM sorry to have missed the minister and his wife," says Mark. "I called on purpose to inquire after Thyrza's health, or rather, the health of Mrs. Dods."

"They left for Queensmuir about an hour ago," replies Mrs. Ferrier; "but I am sure they will regret not having seen you."

"Don't you care to hear how the marriage went off? I gave the bride away as she had no father, and as I did so I could not help thinking that you are forbidden to marry your grandfather, and *vice versâ*."

"Weddings are all much the same; cake, ring, white gown, man and woman, people crying, and a lot of rubbish talked," rejoins Ferrier. "What a storm we had last night! Did you have it at Lillieshill?"

"Slightly; Aunt Fan and the maid-servants were in fits, or would have been had not

Uncle Richard been at home. His invariable prescription for that is cold water. Some one went into hysterics at the Bank yesterday, and he nearly drowned the poor old lady. Fortunately every one knows his peculiarities, or I was afraid the Hislops might not altogether have relished it, as she is a relation of theirs. What damage has the storm done about here?"

"A great many trees were struck by the lightning, a number of sheep and cattle killed, and a haystack at Carmylie Mains was set on fire and burnt to ashes."

"And you had a visitor in the night too, Jack, by way of keeping you lively."

"Yes, a visitor who has gone off with half the silver spoons and the poor old governor's punch-bowl, and the large claret-jug. There is no doubt that Gow was the thief; he has been living in the garret for a number of days."

"Clever rascal!" says Mark, laughing as people do laugh on hearing of some well-planned deception or successful burglary not practised on themselves. "Mrs. Ferrier, I am the humble bearer of a missive from Aunt Fan, inviting you to go to Lillieshill for the next week. Jack has promised for a long time to come over for the partridges, and they are in first-rate condition, simply crying to be shot. Don't say *but*; it is,

begging your pardon, the most beastly word in the English language, and ought to be abolished by law."

"It depends on Rattray," answers Mrs. Ferrier. "If the horses are not required for carting of turnips or potatoes, or something, and if it is not Rattray's day for the post, there is a possibility of going to Lillieshill. Unless it is to go to church in Queensmuir, I always find it difficult to convince Rattray the horses are meant for other things besides farm work."

"I think we may say it is settled then ; for I met Rattray in the avenue with his hands in his pockets sauntering along and he informed me 'there was no muckle tae do.' I have persuaded Mrs. Ferrier to come, and now, Jack, I want you to go up the Witches Law with me."

"Some time or other."

"I mean to-day."

"You are mad, Luke."

"I am as sane as you are, and very likely much saner. I have long wanted to get a sketch of a bird's-eye view from the top. On a clear day you can see fifteen counties and the smoke of Edinburgh."

"What a poetical soul you must have to be willing to climb through miles of wet heather to see the smoke of Edinburgh ! If you want

smoke, there is plenty rising from the fishing-village."

"What a provoking fellow you are, Jack; always going on about common-sense."

"I ask any candid and disinterested observer if the day is clear. The fifteen counties will remain hopelessly shrouded in haze."

"Oh, you know you are not an artist, and you don't understand that a day like this, with shifting clouds and sunshine, is the very one on which to get a good effect. It is of no use painting when there is one great glare of sun and no shadows."

"Then there is your easel and your painting apparatus to be dragged up three miles of soaking wet heather. I shall be getting face-ache, Luke, and as to you, your beauty will be spoiled for ever, by having a face swelled like a Dutch cheese."

"Waterproof boots—long ones—and plenty of whisky," is Mark's laconic reply.

"We shall be caught in the mist, Luke, and it's on the cards that in such a case we should never get down from the Law."

"I have got a charming little easel and a box of paints; no trouble to any one," proceeds Mark. "We can ride to the foot, climb up,

have some grub at the top, and get back to Lillieshill in time for dinner."

"The weather looks very queer and unsettled, and I am not humbugging about the mist."

"I have been up the Matterhorn and some of the biggest mountains in America, and do you think I am afraid of a little mole-hill like the Witches Law? I shall go by myself then, Jack," with the identical argument with which he has often in their dead-and-gone schoolboy days led Ferrier into many a scrape and hair-breadth adventure.

"No, that you shan't. I will come with you. But this is different. Up those other places you had guides who knew every inch of the ground. I have been only over it once before myself."

"Don't come if you don't like," says Mark, pretending to have taken offence. "Mrs. Ferrier must think I want you to go to the North Pole, or to some equally inaccessible place."

After some further discussion, Ferrier, in spite of sundry misgivings, consents to the expedition. He sees Mrs. Ferrier off for Lillieshill in the great family coach, and then Mark and he start for the Witches Law.

Behind the steading and deserted farm-buildings of Carmylie, there is some rising ground

crowned by a plantation of pine-trees mixed on the outskirts with larches. Through this wood a cart-track to the Witches Law winds on to a bleak moor. At the confines, or northern extremity of the moor the ground dips down suddenly into a deep valley, almost a ravine, scarcely half a quarter of a mile in breadth. From this gorge the Witches Law, a large spur of the Glencairn Mountains, nearly four thousand feet in height, rises towering above the little glen, affording secure protection to a farmhouse built at the west side from the piercing north winds of winter. It consists of three peaks, and measures no less than five miles from the first peak to the last, owing to the hollows and undulations of its heathery slopes. Only one of these peaks is sharp and pointed, the two others are round and smooth. The pointed peak is the highest, commanding the best view, and it is to this one that Mark and Ferrier are directing their steps. From a freak of nature, or perhaps being the remains of the Flood—on this geologists are not agreed—a small loch has been placed beneath the highest peak of the Witches Law. By the common people it is called the Witches Loch, and many of them believe that on New Year's Eve the witches ride on broomsticks over its turbid waters. On three sides

the loch is guarded by precipitous cliffs, on the fourth the shore is strewn with boulders and broken fragments of stone. The loch has been celebrated from time immemorial for a rare kind of trout, dark on the skin and speckled with bright red spots. They are, however, very shy and bite best about eleven o'clock at night. The minister, being a skilful angler, has often spent a summer's night at the Witches Loch, and returned home to the manse with a well filled basket.

Mark and Ferrier dismount at the farmhouse, and ask leave to put their horses in the stable there.

"Ye will no be ganging up the Law the day?" says the farmer's wife.

"Oh yes," returns Mark, "to see the view."

"Ye shouldna bide lang," continues the woman, "it's gae late i' the day for ganging up, and it's no vera canny in the gloaming."

"We shall not stay long," answers Mark, and he hastened to meet Ferrier, rejoiced that the occupation of stabling the horses has prevented him from hearing the woman's words.

"Well, Luke, do you still intend going?" asks Ferrier.

"The day seems very propitious, so I think

we will. There may not be such a day for the light and shade again this autumn."

The two men accordingly commence the ascent of the hill, and are soon knee deep in the long heather, covered with draggled wet spiders' webs. They slip now and again into a little mountain burn, which finds its way down from the loch; sometimes they stumble over a prickly whinze-bush, or knock up against a boulder stone. A grouse rises beneath their feet, and they pause to draw breath at the top of one ridge, while above them hangs the scarped edge of another heathery eminence.

"I wish I had a gun," says Ferrier, "that bird is a fine shot. He knows he is safe, listen to his audacious crow."

"The best shots always come when one has nothing to shoot with, just as Sunday is often a better day for fishing than week days. What do you think?"

"If I were at the top of the Law I would tell you. You don't catch me here again in a hurry."

"Sit down and rest, and have a little whisky."

"Oh no; I'll go on until we reach the loch."

"The effects may have faded if we do not push on."

"I don't bargain to stay long when we are up, Luke."

"You shall go down whenever you like."

The first part of the ascent is successfully accomplished, and the climbing is comparatively easy. As they go higher they pass several flocks of sheep, and two or three shepherd boys knitting stockings and tending their flocks at one and the same time. The scene becomes wilder, more desolate, more bleak. The ground is only clad with short scanty grass, the long bushy heather is left behind, and the red earth ploughed and furrowed by the thunder-rain, appears in strips among the withering vegetation. The climbing hitherto presenting no difficulty, is more arduous as they approach the rocks surrounding the Witches Loch, and the hill begins to narrow towards the pointed peak.

"Deep hole that," observes Mark. "I should not like to fall in there."

"The people say it is as deep as the Law is high."

"In that case there would not be much prospect of getting out again."

"I suppose we are high enough now."

"Oh, we will go right up to the top of the peak, as we have come so far. I am not going to be done out of my fifteen counties."

“I hope you will see them,” says Ferrier. “What rocks those are! You would get an ugly fall.”

“Ah, now, Jack; was it not worth while climbing to see this!” exclaims Mark, pulling out his tin box containing his paints and brushes, and seating himself on a cairn of stones raised on the summit of the Law by the sappers and miners, when measuring the country.

The landscape lies spread out like a panorama before them for many miles—sea, wood, and mountains. The day is cloudy. There is little sunshine, and that little falls chiefly on the sea; and the coast on the other side of the bay of Carmylie, beyond the sand-bar with its long green links, not much to look at but a perfect paradise to the enthusiastic golf players of Middleby. The bay is dotted with the white sails of boats, the masts of ships, and the funnels of steamers. On the water all is brightness; there is a heavy swell on the mackerel-coloured waves. But the mountains are dark and stormy, rich russet-brown and deep purple against a grey sky over which clouds are rapidly forming, and as rapidly dispersing; so that there is an alternate glow of light streaking the hills with faint greens, and pinks, and blues, fading out of the tints into sober brown and purple.

"It is not bad," says Ferrier, lighting a pipe and unfastening a packet of sandwiches. "Where is the whisky, Luke? Have you got all your traps with you? I should not be surprised if you had left the most important of your painting fads behind, and that you can't paint after we have climbed all this distance. Never call the Law a molehill again!"

"You have no eye for scenery," rejoins Mark, beginning to sketch in one of the transient effects.

"I have when my mind is at ease; but I can't look at bits of light and shade when I am so awfully worried as I have been lately; and I expect I shall be worse before I am better."

"How are things going?" asks Mark.

"Hang it if I have not left the medium at home, and the oils won't work without it."

"Come, I call that good."

"The landscape is never the same for two minutes together," pursues Mark, sitting down on a flat piece of stone and resting his back against the cairn. "So I could not have painted it even if I had had the medium. But about your affairs, Jack. How do matters stand?"

"As far as I can make out, the debts amount, without lawyers' expenses—they always run up a few hundreds for themselves—to nearly thirty

thousand pounds, to meet which I have got about fifteen thousand. If the property had not been gone long ago, I could have raised the amount on it."

"Fifteen thousand pounds is a very large sum."

"It is a very large sum."

"And how goes the business in Shanghai?"

"Lennox says, grey shirtings, $8\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. tls. 1.97; Cotton, $8\frac{1}{2}$ tls. Silk, limited; business and exchange on London, 6/.' Things are not so flourishing as they were ten years ago," answers Ferrier, reading from a letter.

"There must always be fluctuations in every trade," returns Mark, thoughtfully. "On the whole, that is very moderate. Why don't you marry, Jack? Each of the MacNab girls will have twenty thousand pounds."

"Don't feel inclined. Besides, she would refuse me. And old MacNab told me her money would be strictly tied up. I should not be able to touch a penny of it."

"There are ways and means by which the money could be raised."

"Yes, I know there are; but they did not suit me."

"Suppose that I lent you the money. You could repay me by instalments. The interest on

fifteen thousand pounds would come pretty heavy on you, as you would have Mrs. Ferrier to look after and your business to carry on. I shan't offer you again, Jack. You need have no scruples with me. We have surely known each other long enough not to stand upon ceremony. I don't think that you will make a better bargain of it. Is there any whisky left in your flask? Why, it is the one I had in China. What fun you and I had together. I often think I should like to go back again to the old free-and-easy life. It was a long way better than the formalities of this country."

"There is only a drop; if you had spoken sooner you should have had more. I hardly know what to say about your offer, Luke. I did not think you were in earnest before."

"Accept it, to be sure. Of course I was in earnest, as much in earnest as I am now. I say, look at that lamb, how tame it is!" as a black faced lamb scrambles up the steep declivity and fearlessly eats out of Mark's hand the broken scraps of bread crumbled down from Ferrier's luncheon.

All of a sudden a cloud overshadows the mountain-top, and the peak of the Witches Law is enveloped in mist. At the same time a puff of wind catches Mark's easel and blows it away.

He jumps up hastily from his seat, and, with an exclamation of "By Jove! how dark it is!" forgetting the dangerous position in which he is on the cliffs above the Witches Loch, runs after it.

Ferrier pursues him, shouting to him to stop, and he fancies he hears him cry, "Save me, Jack, save me." However he cannot tell for certain, and he himself goes slipping, sliding along, the mist encircling him round like a shroud, until reaching some hard substance, he clutches hold of it, but there is neither trace, nor sound, nor vestige of Mark.

"Luke, Luke!" he shouts. "For God's sake answer. Where are you?"

The mist chokes his breath and blinds his eyes, and sends his voice, dulled and deadened, back upon him. How long he has lain there he does not know; when the mist parts, a light breaking gradually through it, becoming stronger, shows Ferrier that he is lying a few inches from a precipice on the west side of the loch. Down below is the black, still, rippleless water; the naked rocks splashed with burnt umber weather-stains, and pale green moss, over which a hawk flies on its road to its eyrie in a crag where the foot of man has never set its profane impress.

A little below the precipice over which Ferrier is looking, is a lower rock, a sort of table-rock. It projects some distance into the water, and is approachable with safety further down the incline of the hill. On this rock Ferrier thinks he perceives a lump of light grey, resembling the light coloured summer clothes worn by Mark. He is forced to exercise a good deal of caution in case of losing his own footing, but he hurries down as fast as he can. He is not a moment too soon, for as he reaches the rock the mist again settles, having only cleared up for a few minutes. The light grey lump is Mark, as he supposed, but whether dead or alive Ferrier is unable at once to tell. So far as he can see, there is not a bruise about him. He has evidently fallen from a height, but he may be only insensible from the mere act of falling, and not from injuries received from the force of the fall.

“Luke, dear old fellow. Luke, Luke,” he says.

But Mark lies in a heavy stupor and no answer comes from the parted lips, and no smile kindles in the blue eyes that, despite his treachery, have always looked kindly on Jack Ferrier. Great gasping breaths begin to lift his chest after awhile, and sometimes a spasm of pain convulses his fair, frank, countenance, otherwise

he is very still, while Ferrier, who has loved his friend with a loyal true love "passing the love of women," sits silently by his side, counting with tranquil fingers but aching heart, the slow pulses of the fast ebbing life. Ferrier lifts the curly head on his knee, wraps Mark in his own coat and waistcoat to keep him from the cold, and endeavours to screw a few drops of whisky from the flasks ; but in vain, there is not a drop left in either of them. The mist grows denser and thicker. Ferrier durst not move, and he waits patiently through the long hours of the evening and the night until he is chilled to the bone and weary with the weight of Mark resting against him. But he prefers any amount of fatigue to the risk of Mark feeling cold from contact with the damp heather and grass on the rock.

He weighs the chances of any one going to look for them from the farmhouse, as they had not returned to claim the horses, and decides that the chances are few. The people would hardly venture up the hill in the face of danger and the teeth of a fog thick as peasoup, so he relinquishes that idea as hopeless.

Towards midnight the mist rolls off from the Witches Law. Mountain peak after mountain peak, seamed by age and crested with heather,

appears grand and solemn, while in the glen the fog still rests, veiling sea and valley in its soft white folds. The fresh, pure, intensely clear air blows upon Ferrier from the hill-top. He feels as though face to face with his Creator, spirit to spirit, soul to soul, among the solitudes of the quiet mountains; not a vestige of earth visible but the weird peaks rising from the sea of mist, and the tremulous breath of the wind sobbing over the upland heath. Just above the grey crags of the Witches Loch the stars begin to shine and twinkle one by one in the dark blue sky.

“Jack,” says Mark, looking into Ferrier’s face, “it’s all up.”

“Whereabouts are you hurt?” asks Jack. “Let me lay you on the heather, and I will go to the farmhouse for something to carry you down the hill on.”

“I never thought it would come to this,” pursues Mark, “don’t leave me. I should not like to be left here.”

“No, I won’t, Luke.”

“I am going very fast, it’s my back. I think it must be broken. Did I not fall?”

“Yes, in the mist.”

“I recollect now; Jack, I must tell you while I have my senses, and I had rather that I

told you myself, than that you should hear it from somebody else. I've been an awfully bad fellow to you. It was I who took Lilith from you, and you remember that licking your father gave you at Blackbeck House. I ought to have had it for——”

“It's all over years upon years ago,” interrupts Ferrier with exceeding gentleness, “Lilith was a real bad one, and I was well quit of her, and as to the flogging, it did me good. Don't tire yourself with talking. Couldn't you wait here while I get some one to help you to a house?”

“Don't leave me,” begs Mark, imploringly, “look—in—my—desk—at—Lillieshill and you'll find all that need be about Lilith.”

His strength ebbs swiftly away, his eyes can scarce distinguish Ferrier's face in the pale light of the stars; his breath waxes faint and low.

“Jack,” he says, just as the moon shows her crescent over the jagged ridges of the western cliffs, “shake hands.”

Ferrier extends his muscular hand, and grasps Mark's, slight and white as a woman's, in it. A great convulsion takes possession of his whole frame, “Lilith, Lilith,” he murmurs, and “babbling” over and over again the name of the woman for whom he had been willing to sell

soul and honour, his breath quivers and dies. When after a long silence Ferrier raises himself to chafe the stiffening hand yet clasped in his own, now growing cold, he finds that Luke Mark is dead.

By-and-by the day dawns, little streaks of pink deepen into crimson, and spread along the east, widening into broad bands over the blue hazy line of coast; the sea shines, boats stud the horizon, and the mist floats away in fantastic wreaths. Ferrier gently places Luke in a little heathery hollow, and goes down the hill through the stillness of the early morning, before the sun has risen, to the farmhouse. Peace and tranquillity are on the mountains, sublime in their unspeakable majesty of rocky crowns and craggy heights. Calmness is on the brown tracts of moorland, from which the purple glow has faded, and the unmoved waters of the Witches Loch. The timid sheep are hardly awake enough yet to begin their morning meal, and the sulky, long-horned shaggy Highland cattle are still sleeping close together, under the shelter of a lone Galloway dike, which separates the lands of one laird from those of another, "marching" together. The curlews, difficult to distinguish from the grey granite stones, strewing the hill-sides, will soon be roused sufficiently to devour

the "early worm," and some grouse go to drink at a little russet heather-fringed pool, where a coot is already before them, paddling over the peat-tinged waters. No smoke comes from the farmhouse or the bothie attached to it, and Ferrier is some time before he can succeed in awakening the inmates. The farmer and several of the ploughmen volunteer to assist him, and with ropes and a long ladder, they climb the hill where Ferrier has left Mark. He has evidently not moved since Ferrier went away. Jack has hoped against hope, that in spite of his inward convictions, and all evidence to the contrary, Mark will yet live. But all hope, and all doubt alike 'vanish on seeing the motionless figure. Yet were it not for the unutterable repose of the body, one would have thought he had merely fallen asleep after being very tired. There is nothing dreadful about the handsome finely chiselled features, the fair hair tumbled in a wave over his brow, as it had a trick of doing, and the neat slim figure in its light summer clothes—Mark was always a good deal of a dandy in his way. The lamb, which to feed had been the last action of his life, stands close to his head, cropping the grass among a little colony of bluebells and fading spires of fox-gloves. Ferrier recognises it as being the same,

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from a peculiar brand he had noticed on its neck.

“He has worn awa’, sir,” says the farmer, addressing himself to Ferrier, when he has applied the polished case of his watch to Mark’s lips and found no breath comes to dim its surface. “You maun hae had a cauld nicht of it,” touching the coat and waistcoat in which Mark is still wrapped.

“How will ye be tae tak’ him doon?” asks one of the men.

They lift Mark on to the ladder and begin tying him on with the ropes when Ferrier interferes, bidding them to desist.

“You are too rough with him,” he says, “and Luke could never bear to be roughly handled.”

Then he fastens the ropes himself as softly and carefully as though Mark could still feel, and two of the men bearing one end of the ladder and two more the other end, they go slowly down the hill with their sad burden in the morning sunlight, which a few hours before he had ascended in such vigour of life and spirits.





CHAPTER XI.

AFTER Mark's funeral Mr. and Miss Lefroy request Ferrier to undertake the task of arranging all his papers and manuscripts, a task for which the poor old broken-hearted brother and sister find themselves totally unfitted, and one which they desire to be finished as soon as may be, Luke's wife sending in her claims upon his fortune immediately on hearing of his death.

As Ferrier docketts the letters and correspondence on many subjects, business and otherwise, he can scarcely realize that Mark is really dead. He catches himself half a dozen times at least, in the act of turning round in his chair, expecting to hear the familiar cheery voice exclaiming, "Well, Jack. What are you about to-day?" and more than once or twice he looks out at the diamond-paned casement window over which the ivy-leaves and ivy-twigs twined in luxuriant

profusion, as though they loved to ornament and decorate the red walls of the house, to see whether Mark is not coming up the broad gravel sweep by the smooth shaven lawn. It is very difficult to believe that Mark is not merely delayed by some accident, or that he is not out shooting, or has not gone out on a sketching expedition from which he must return by-and-by. With the lowered rays of the October sunshine slanting into the painting-room upon the objects the dead man had loved, his guns and fishing rods, his bits of draperies for his figures, his uncompleted sketches, his easel, his palette with some colours still mixed which he had intended to wash off on his return from the Law, all the trifles in fact which served to show that admiration for the beautiful and pleasant things of life which formed so conspicuous a part in Mark's character, it seems strange that the owner is lying cold and rigid and silent in Queensmuir kirkyard, a hidden and vanished thing for all time. Nothing has been touched in the room. All is in exactly the same order in which Mark left it, even to his black-and-gold smoking cap, and a box of prime Cabanas on a table near his desk.

Of course everybody had something to say concerning the wife he had kept sedulously

concealed for ten years, and of course everybody said their say. It affords a lively topic of conversation at all the morning calls in Queensmuir for several days after Lilith's existence becomes known to the world at large, and the county who constitute the Lefroys' world pity the Lillieshill people, and wonder how Mr. Lefroy took it, and if the disconsolate widow would come to Scotland. On the whole, after the first outburst of grief for the nephew in whom all his hopes, his pride and his plans were centred, Mr. Lefroy takes it quietly enough. He eats his dinner much as usual. Mark's loss does not interfere with his enjoying his prime sherry, or from inspecting his cattle with his ordinary interest. These accidents *will* happen. People must die. What is the use of bewailing and mourning for ever? Can it bring them back again? Has one not a duty towards oneself, and if that supremely important duty is not properly performed, we ourselves have to suffer for it. Mr. Lefroy's sorrow finds vent in composing some verses of poetry entitled "In Memoriam," to Mark's memory, which appeared in several of the local newspapers.

This done, he designed a monument for Mark's grave, and then he had a clause inserted in his will, strictly entailing his precious China

treasures, the old books, his model cow-house, &c. So that the next owner when he comes into Lillieshill will not be able to part with a stick or stone upon the place. But although Mr. Lefroy contrived to console himself without much difficulty, it is very different with Miss Lefroy. Slow to love, and when loving, taking root deeply, poor Miss Lefroy changed so much in appearance after the day that Mark was brought home dead to Lillieshill, that Ferrier when he comes to arrange his friend's papers about ten days after the fatal accident, scarcely recognises her.

In the way of arrangement there is little to do among Mark's letters. His artistic propensities did not interfere with his very methodical habits, so the documents relating to business matters are found, as might be expected, neatly tied up and placed in pigeon-holes; in fact he could almost have laid his hands in the dark upon any he might have required. Among these there is no paper relating to Lilith, but in a desk Ferrier finds a few short letters written since Mark's return from China, and all signed "Your affectionate wife, Lilith." Most of them contain requests for money. They are ill spelt and worse written, and in certain phrases betray the coarse illiterate mind of the woman who had written them, and

whose fascination and beauty had spell-bound both Ferrier and Mark, and although one of them has shaken off her bonds, still the other remained bound, while both have retained traces of those bonds through the whole of their lives. Besides Lilith's letters which showed that the ruling passion of her youth was yet strong in her, there is a half-finished one from Mark addressed to Ferrier.

"Dear Jack,—Since I saw you the other day I have been thinking over what you told me about your affairs. Not long after I came home from China I made my will. Mr. Hislop, in Queensmuir, drew it up, and it is lodged in his hands. I do not suppose that I shall die any the sooner for having made it. I mention this to you because I have left you sixteen thousand pounds in it, and it seems a pity that when you are in such want of the money you should be obliged to wait for it until I am dead, which, I trust, will not be for years. I think, therefore, you had better let me give it you at once, and have done with your troubles. It may not be enough, but at any rate it will go a good way towards stopping the mouths of your creditors. Now don't be nasty about it. If you should be nasty, why not accept it as a loan? but when you have had this letter I shall come to Carmylie and talk it over with you.

While I am upon this subject I may as well tell you the reason why I did not fall in love with little Thyrza. You recollect asking me about her the other day. Well, you can't very well be in love with two people at once, at least I can't, and the truth is I am married, and my wife is Lilith, of whom you were so fond in the old days at Shanghai. I should have told you years ago, only you had no suspicion that it was I who had acted the part of David and stolen from you your Bathsheba, and I could not bear that you should think me dishonourable. The night before your wedding that was to have been, but which never came off, you had just been to see Lilith when I went into the little cobbled courtyard of her house. The moon was shining very brightly. The feast of lanterns had been lately held in her honour, so she was bound to shine decently, and out of that little window behind which Chinese women gratify their curiosity Lilith was leaning. Whether she had dressed herself to receive you or not I do not know, but she had on a low-necked gown of silver woven silk tissue, and that beautiful warm-tinted mass of yellow hair of hers was streaming in ripples, such as a painter would have luxuriated in painting, over her soft white throat and shoulders.

“ ‘Is that you, Luke?’ she said, with a little

laugh. We had got the length of calling each other by our Christian names long before, and I came nearer and kissed her. She was not angry with me, or if she was she concealed it very well.

“ ‘I shall see a good deal of you when you are married, as we shall live in the same house up the Yang-t’sse-Kiang,’ she continued.

“ ‘I wish you were going to be my wife instead of Ferrier’s,’ I answered.

“ ‘Why did not you say so before? You are far better off than he. Are not you the heir to a nice property in Scotland?’

“ ‘To be sure I am.’

“ ‘Then why don’t you ask me to marry you?’ said she. ‘I daresay of the two I like the boy Jack Ferrier best. He has got such a lot of pluck and such a temper. I like a bad-tempered man; they are better fun. But you have plenty of money. I believe you are afraid to ask me. You dare not do it.’

“ ‘You knew Lilith in the flesh. When I have said that I have said all. You can imagine without my relating it how she tempted me, and what she could be when she put forth all her powers; and perhaps it should be taken into consideration that I was only twenty-three, and that I was dazzled by her beauty and her jewels. Young men think little of a woman unless she

has plenty of rustling silks and two or three gold chains, and heaps of rings and earrings; nose jewels too, if they were fashionable, would not be objected to; Lilith had plenty of ornaments and plenty of dash; there was no mistake about her. I knew all the time that she was thoroughly mercenary, and valued me only in proportion to my gifts of trinkets and dresses. I knew what sort of a mind she had, for she was at no pains to conceal it. Yet still I loved the woman then, and I love her now. I could not explain why if I tried. Well, she had laid down her challenge, and I—why, I was a man and she was a lovely woman, so I took it up.

“ ‘I’ll come with you to-night,’ she went on.

“ We settled to go that very night to San Francisco. I sat on the steps of the quaint doorway drumming on the cobbles of the courtyard while she changed her gown. A steamer bound for Lima, with chemicals and spice, was in port, and Lilith, wrapped up and thickly veiled, followed me through the pathways—there were only paths then, as there was no traffic, excepting by Coolies—to the harbour. I offered a handsome sum to the commander of the vessel to take us on board, and a saloon and cabin were assigned to us. And then came the difficulty about being married. The captain solved that. He read the

service for us, but, unfortunately, as he was the only person present besides ourselves, we had no record of the ceremony; the ring was one of mine, with a *solitaire* diamond, the stone of which we turned inside in order to complete its similitude to the real article as far as was possible.

“On going on board we had not had time to observe what the crew were like, but the next day we had abundance of opportunity for judging of them. A more villanous set of scamps and blackguards I never saw. There were a couple of Lascars, splendid fellows as to height, who could have felled an ox with a blow of their fists. Scarcely the half of the men were Chinese, the greater proportion being half breed Spanish Mexicans, and an awful bad lot they were. I did not like the look of things at all. The captain was an American, a Southerner, who had got into tribulation with both the Federals and Confederates by playing into the hands of both parties, and he very nearly swung for it. However, he ran the blockade at Charleston with a tidy steamer, made for the open sea, and with about a couple of hundred pounds in his pocket, began trading between Lima and the ports thereabouts and Shanghai. Had it not been for his unfortunate habit of not being able to keep faith if he could turn a little more money,

he would not have been a bad sort of chap. The first day was well enough. I happen to have some idea of navigation, and towards evening I remarked to the captain we were out of our reckoning. Lilith and I went into our cabin and played cards with a horrible old pack she washed in a bottle of eau de Cologne before we could use them. We had not been there very long before there was the sound of a scrimmage on deck, and, going up, we discovered the crew had put the captain in irons, scuttled the ship, and were getting off into the boats as fast as they could.

“Lilith’s entreaties joined to mine had no effect on them, and the men rowed away, leaving us on the sinking vessel. The captain was stowed away in the hold, and pieces of planking were nailed across the entrance. I wrenched them off with a crowbar and helped him out, and then we constructed a raft, and launched it, Lilith looking after our money and her jewels. We were just out of the vessel in time, for we had scarcely rowed off a couple of hundred yards when the ship heeled over. Most ships shiver before they go down, but she did not, she simply heeled right over, and down she sank fathoms deep.

“We were afraid lest a typhoon should get up,

or one of those sudden partial squalls peculiar to the Chinese seas ; however, nothing happened, and about the middle of the next day we were picked up by a junk, which put us ashore after a slow voyage, on the island of Formosa.

“ There I took a house, and for three months Lilith and I lived in paradise. You may say it was an earthly paradise. I do not deny it, still to me it was a paradise. Nothing was wanting to complete my felicity. The only thing that worried me was that I had deceived you, and you were my friend. We had been in Formosa about three months, when I saw a tall, handsome dark man wandering about among the cinnamon groves. I had seen him before in Shanghai, and knew him by sight, though I had not spoken to him. His name was Dawson. If I deceived you I was myself in turn deceived, for within two days of this man’s appearance in Formosa Lilith was gone. I was unable to trace them, and until my return from China I heard no news of her. Thyrsa had not been long at Lillieshill before I had a letter from Lilith asking for money. And now, Jack, I have told you all this because I intend——”

Here the letter ends. Ferrier’s first reflection on reading it is, what bad luck has pursued him. The obstacle which has all along stood

between him and Thyrza is removed, and he is again a comparatively well-to-do man. But a worse obstacle than the former, want of money, is now between him and the girl whom he loves and covets, an abyss yawns between them which death alone can bridge over. If she could only have delayed her marriage with the minister for ten days longer !





CHAPTER XII.

THE end of December has almost come, and there is very little of the year left to run its course. The bride and bridegroom have had an extremely pleasant trip to Arran and the west coast of Scotland, where the minister has many friends. Thyrsa has also been at High Riggs, at which place both parties made so favourable an impression on the minds of old Mr. and Mrs. Rutherford, that they actually promised to pay the minister and his wife a visit at the manse in the course of the following summer; they also expressed their intention of giving the bride the portion her father ought to have received.

Mr. Dods showed his knowledge of the world when he told Thyrsa she would find visiting her rich relations a very different affair from visiting them as a poor, penniless spinster. For Mr.

Dods was by no means a needy man. There is a great deal also in appearances. The minister was not a man to be despised. His *tout ensemble* was well up to the mark, and altogether in good form. People do not care to have scrubby, mean-looking, impecunious relatives to visit them, more especially if they are addicted to button-holding you at every turn, calling you by your Christian name, suggesting alterations in your house, interfering with your servants, and disordering the proprieties of your dinner table. Mr. and Mrs. Rutherford were not above the weaknesses of our mortal nature. Their grandchild, it was evident, had not disgraced them in the eyes of their friends by marrying a butcher, or baker, or candlestick-maker. Her husband was a credit to her, a man of a solid, steady, upright character, well known for his antiquarian researches, respectably connected, and tolerably well off for a minister. So Mr. and Mrs. Rutherford took her to their bosom, and forgave the sin of her father in marrying the woman of his choice; and Mr. Dods, seeing with his bodily eyes the glories of High Riggs, could not help, to a certain extent, taking a more exalted view of his dearly beloved little wife. A nice girl—no matter how nice she may be—becomes decidedly nicer when unexpectedly

improved by a handsome tocher and brilliant surroundings.

The excitement consequent on the marriage and wedding tour has cooled down. The bride and bridegroom are at the manse, now in excellent order; Thyrza has sat in state and duly received all her visitors. She has also been to kirk, quietly dressed in a snuff-coloured gown, and bonnet to match, and has safely gone through the severe trial of being stared at by the congregation as she sat alone in the manse-pew, till she would have given anything for a hole to creep into and hide herself from notice. On that Sunday the kirk was filled to overflowing. Folks who were always ready enough with some paltry excuse when taken to task by the minister for their neglect of Sabbath duties, had no difficulty in attending on that day. "Rheums" and convenient "sair heids" were alike forgotten; even the want of proper "claes" was not considered. There were more "bawbees" and brass buttons collected at the door on that day than was known to have been the case since Mr. Dods was inducted as parish minister.

The bride and bridegroom have, of course, returned the calls. She has been duly introduced to all the sheep of every description—poor and thin, as well as rich and fat—and her

husband has driven her in the gig drawn by the stumpy, bottle-brush-maned pony, to visit every farmhouse and cottage in the glen. This she enjoyed more than making calls in the town ; for driving is a treat to her, and she finds the remarks of the country people far more interesting and amusing, from their real native humour and shrewdness, than those of Mr. Dods's town cousins and friends.

They have now been at home about two months, and Thyrsa has fairly settled down into the regular routine of her daily duties as the wife of the minister of Carmylie.

There is not a large amount of parochial work, as the village, and the glen beyond it, are so healthy that few die under seventy years of age, the pure, bracing air being quite an antidote to all epidemics and fevers. The people themselves are all of them by no means badly off ; the earnings of the fishermen of course depend on the success of the herring-boats, and those of the dwellers in the glen on the harvest. The poverty, such as it is, cannot be called squalid ; even in the worst seasons there is not that wretched, abject misery which prevails in the crowded courts and alleys of a large manufacturing town like Middleby.

Thyrsa attends as regularly as she can the

services of her own church, but this does not hinder her having grand ideas of improving the style of singing in her husband's kirk; she would, if possible, start a Sabbath-school. Both these plans, however, fall through on account of the lateness of the season, and the distance the scholars would have to come across the moors on the winter afternoons. She is disappointed, and Mr. Dods consoles her by advising her to wait until the long, light evenings of spring set in.

Thyrza begins to find life at the manse very dull and monotonous. Ever since she could thread a needle, she has been accustomed to work in some way or another. At the *pension* she had plenty to do even during the holidays; when Miss Holt left her to the tender mercies of the old Frenchwoman, that lady took care to provide her with employment in the shape of mending the house linen, and failing sheets and pillow-cases, there was always an abundance of old music, the leaves of which she used to stitch together.

Now she has but little to occupy her time. In the morning she attends to her housekeeping, and then, if the weather be fine, she takes a walk, generally alone. Mr. Dods is wholly engrossed by an important work on the Pictish Antiquities

and other ancient remains near Carmylie, and as his ideas and theories, once scattered, are not easily again collected, Thyrza does not like to disturb him.

Yes, in spite of her good fortune in securing so substantial a matrimonial prize as Mr. Dods, in spite of furnishing her drawing-room as she likes, in spite of having as much pocket-money as she cares to spend, in spite of being adored by her husband as it does not fall to the lot of every woman to be adored, Thyrza is very dull, exceedingly dull. And the worst of it is that she feels duller every day. There is nothing for her to do, and she has a strong consciousness that she could work if there were anything for her to work at. She longs to go into the world, to take part in the battle of life, just as she looked out from the *pension* windows at the peasants in their gay *fête* dresses, and longed to be out among the busy crowd. Whereas, in truth, did she but know it, she is already engaged in the great contest. Her battle is with herself.

It is an existence of utter stagnation and quietness, which even a middle-aged woman possessed of many resources within herself, who had been accustomed to society, would probably have found dull. How much more, then, a young lively girl like Thyrza, whom nature has endowed with an

intense capacity for enjoyment. She says her prayers very earnestly, entreating that God will make her love her husband and let her forget Ferrier. As yet her prayers have met with no answer. Perhaps she has not asked aright or with enough faith.

To-day the restless feeling is unusually strong upon her, because she has had a long solitary morning and afternoon. Mr. Dods has gone to Middleby, and so little does he comprehend the varying moods and disposition of his girl-wife, that to amuse and keep her from "wearying" while his great work on the "Antiquities of Carmylie" is being composed, he intends driving out Cousin Jemima with him to the manse.

A tea-dinner with the best china and the best linen tablecloth is prepared for the travellers in the dining-room or parlour. Thyrza has been in several times to see whether the blinds are drawn down and the fire burning brightly, and that all is as it should be, remembering that it will have to undergo the scrutiny of Cousin Jemima; and as she arranges a plate of scones placed unhandily on the table, she cannot help thinking how she would have enjoyed getting everything ready and pretty for Ferrier's return from his business.

She has told Tibbie to keep the kettle boiling on the hob in the kitchen, and has left the lamp lighted in the parlour, but turned down, in readiness to be screwed up on the first sounds of the approach of the gig, and this done she goes to the drawing-room, and sitting down on the rug by the fire, gives way to a fit of crying. She does not indulge herself long in this luxury, however, and drying her eyes tries to knit the thumb of a muffatee she is making for Mr. Dods, but at length she lays her work aside, and rising from her lowly seat takes a chair, as Cousin Jemima very possibly may make remarks on the rug not being a dignified position for a married woman to occupy. The gloaming, or dark half-hour, being a favourite time of hers, she does not light the lamp or candles, and with her hands folded one on the other upon her knees, she gives herself up to her old trick of dreaming.

“Oh, is that you, Mr. Dods?” she says, jumping up and running to the door; she puts her arm within that of a man who has just entered, and draws him further into the room. “It has been such a long tiresome day without any one to speak to.”

“I regret I have not the happiness of being Mr. Dods,” replies Ferrier.

“*Mais*, well, it is a fact that it is, monsieur,”

she exclaims in confusion, withdrawing her arm from his.

"There is no need for you to go such a mile away from me, although I am not Mr. Dods," says he, approaching near the fire which Thyrza pokes into a blaze. "You seem very comfortable here," he continues, with a quick glance of his cold steel-grey eyes that causes Mrs. Dods to retreat further into the shadow of the mantel-shelf, that he may not see she has been crying.

"Oh, we are comfortable enough, and I have nothing to complain of."

"Ah, I suppose you do not hold those opinions you once did, when you and I sat on the bridge by the Bogg?"

"I have not forgotten, monsieur. I remember I did talk a great deal of nonsense, but I thought you had forgotten," she rejoins, with the sort of thrill she cannot prevent coming over her whenever she is with Ferrier. "I am wiser now and older."

"By a few months."

"And altered?"

"Hum, yes."

"For the better I hope."

"Query, but we will leave that an open question. Altered in one respect, yes, you wear earrings now. A girl whom I once knew had

pretty little ears, and did not disfigure them by wearing earrings. The same girl has gone in for the fashions since then, and has the ordinary style, just like anybody else."

"Mr. Dods——"

"Liked you to wear them, and it was only natural you should do what he wished."

"But, monsieur, they are pretty earrings," taking out one from her small shell-shaped ear.

"Look, they are not common, or vulgar, or tawdry. Nothing can be simpler—a bunch of grapes, with pearls for grapes, and they are very old; they belonged to Mr. Dods's mother."

"So I see," returns Ferrier. "Is Mr. Dods not at home?"

"No, he has been in Middleby all day; and he is bringing out Cousin Jemima with him to pay a long visit, and it is very slow."

"How nice poor Mark's pictures look! He had a good deal of taste. By-the-bye, he has left enough money to square my affairs, and I am a free man again."

"I can imagine why he did so," says she, placing her little feet, daintily shod in high-heeled shoes with big rosettes, on the fender and holding out her hands to the fire. The light dances on the minister's carbuncle ring, which she wears above her guard and wedding-ring.

"You knew about his wife all the time and kept the secret well."

"I very nearly let it out once or twice."

"Poor dear Mark, I shall never have such a true friend again! We had known each other ever since we were little shavers. Ah, well, Mrs. Dods, has the minister converted you?"

"No."

"Calvinism is, in some respects, a very convenient religion. If you believe its extreme tenets, you are not troubled at all. If you are one of the elect, you will be saved; if you are not of the elect you won't, do what you may and try as you can. Anyhow, your actions, whether good or bad, can't affect the ultimate result, which to my mind upsets one's notions of right and wrong."

"The minister's cousins are of the elect of the elect; the *crème de la crème* of the elect," says she, mischievously.

"I daresay the minister believes more firmly than ever in unconditional predestination. I should do so if I were in his shoes."

"Why, monsieur?"

"Because—can't you guess? he believes that you were unconditionally predestined from all eternity to be his wife. At the other side of the globe, so to speak, a small child is taken off by

the best fellow in the world and brought up in a *pension* in France. A wave of fate or destiny brings you to Carmylie, and there you find the venerable minister ready waiting for you. This was all absolutely predestined to happen, and it is very jolly for him. But how about a fellow who was put into the world apparently only to get the ups and downs of life? Is it not unjust to punish him both in this and the next world? What sort of a Deity is it that creates poor human beings and condemns them eternally without regard to their works?"

"I cannot explain what I believe; but, as the French say, '*Le bon Dieu* can do no wrong.' I don't think as you do, monsieur."

"I ought to be contented, for I have come off better than I deserve," he says. "'Pon my word, you are really changed. Change No. I. You pin your collar in front, instead of at the side. Change No. II. You plait your hair in a rational and common sense way round your head without any of those abominable cushions, that is another; and, pardon me, Thyrsa—Mrs. Dods"—pulling himself up hastily. "I keep forgetting you are not a little girl, in whom I took an interest; but a discreet married woman."

"Oh, that she *were* discreet!" whines a wailing voice, which causes Thyrsa to start violently

—a voice belonging to that good, pious Christian woman, the minister's cousin, Jemima Tod. "Oh!" Cousin Jemima has been in the drawing-room for the last minute or so, and has been taking in the scene with all her eyes and ears. Thyrza has left the blinds in the drawing-room up; for there is a big brilliant star shining over the hills, and she did not like to shut it out. The scene is well enough in its way, if Cousin Jemima had only eyes to appreciate it. The room has been completely metamorphosed by Thyrza, and not a trace of its former stiffness remains. There are now little tables with crimson-velvet tops, lounging and American chairs, statuettes, and brackets, and fine old china, formerly shrouded in the recesses of dark cupboards, which would have delighted Mr. Lefroy, arranged with a care for effect, which, however, is thrown away upon Cousin Jemima. On the walls, freshly painted and papered, are several of Mark's pictures; and the portrait of Thyrza, exquisitely finished, hangs over the mantelpiece. Most of the knick-knacks Thyrza has bought in Glasgow on her wedding trip; none of them are very expensive, but all are pretty; and it is wonderful what a magical change the expenditure of a few pounds and the exercise of a little trouble and ingenuity have wrought. The

room and the person must be past redemption in appearance, if they do not look well in the gloaming and the glimmer of firelight. The blaze of flame into which Thyrza has stirred the fire glows on Ferrier in his shooting Chinese-velvet suit, his stockings of heather mixture wool, the steel muzzle of his gun, and the golden-tipped feathers of a brace of pheasants he has brought for the minister—a peace-offering, and a safe and valid excuse for paying a visit to Thyrza.

She is sitting in a chair very near him. The Miss Tods, in their zeal to cut and shape Thyrza according to their ideas of what a minister's wife ought to be and not according to those specimens which came daily under their view in Queensmuir, had privately given instructions to the dress-maker who was intrusted with Thyrza's trousseau to make it as simple as possible. If their object had been to disfigure Thyrza, it has defeated itself. The plain style and simple make of the quiet dark-grey gown become her better than any elaborate trimming could have done, and the tight body, without a single fold or scrap of anything on it, fits beautifully to the soft curves of the round waist and sloping shoulders.

Cousin Jemima sees nothing to be approved of. Thyrza is receiving a young man in her hus-

band's absence. A young man who tells her she pins her collar straighter than she used to do, and who looks at her with a certain look Cousin Jemima has observed in other men when they were very much in love, and in dangerous proximity to the beloved object.

Ferrier is the first to recover himself. "Pray do not allow me to keep all the fire from you," he says, rising and offering Cousin Jemima a chair.

"What a cold drive we, at least you must have had!" observes Thyrsa.

"We had a cold drive, Cousin Thyrsa!"

"Mr. Dods has not come upstairs yet, has he?" inquires Ferrier.

"Cousin James is giving some directions concerning the welfare of the quadruped Tobias," responds Cousin Jemima.

"Then, Mrs. Dods, will you be so good as to give my kind regards to your——" he meant to have said husband, but the word sticks somehow in his throat, "to Mr. Dods, and tell him the pheasants ought to hang for a day or two before they are cooked. Please also add from Mrs. Ferrier that she says it is a long time since she saw either of you." And he takes his leave, whistles to his dogs, which he has left outside, and meditates all the way home upon his inde

pendent means and the people into whose family Thyrsa has married.

"Well, Thyrsa, my dear," says the minister, walking into the drawing-room, enveloped in an immense hairy Inverness cape, in which he looks very like a huge bear set up on his hind heels, "you are not sorry to see me back again, I dare-say?" kissing her.

"It has been a little lonely," she answers, passively enduring the caress.

"No one been to call?"

"Yes, Mr. Ferrier came a few minutes ago to call upon you. He had been out shooting and brought you a brace of pheasants."

"Oh, that was very good-natured of him. I heard of him in Queensmuir from Cousin Robert. Mr. Mark has divided his property between his wife and Mr. Ferrier. He will be marrying next, and, maybe, Cousin Jemima herself will be astonishing us all some of these fine days."

The minister's words go to Thyrsa's heart with a great stab. She has borne because she must bear it, separation from Ferrier, but she cannot bear that he should marry another woman. The thought has never presented itself to her mind before. Neither has she reflected that if she now depends so much upon the chance of seeing

him in the church on Sunday, or meeting him elsewhere, or having even the pleasure of listening to the ring of his gun in the woods, what she will do when he has absolutely gone away from Carmylie for good and all.

"Stranger things have happened, Cousin James," responds Cousin Jemima.

"Cousin Jemima will perhaps excuse us for a few minutes," goes on the minister, "I have got some fish and some other things from Middleby which I should like Thyrza to see. First of all I think I will empty my coat pockets. There's the *Scotsman*, and the *Courant*, and the *Advertiser* for you, Thyrza, and *Punch*. You will be supplied with news for several days now. Let me see. Here are also a new copy of 'Cruden's Concordance of the Bible,' and a packet of pens and a letter for you from your estimable grandfather, Mr. Rutherford, of High Riggs."

The minister is in exceedingly good temper with himself and *tout le monde*. He has been congratulated by his friends in Middleby on his connexion with such great grandees as the Rutherfords of High Riggs, and all who have called at the manse and seen Thyrza have been loud in their praises of her. Her dowry, too, has been exaggerated to a large sum, and every-

body thinks the minister has come into a fortune. All this makes him more pompous and important than ever. Thyrza helps him to take off his great-coat, a service he only allows her to perform because it shows she has not that painful shrinking from him which had hurt his feelings so much on their wedding-day.

“ Dear me, Cousin James, cannot you take off your own coat ? ” exclaims Miss Tod peevishly, in a way which causes Mr. Dods to rejoice he has married an unregenerate Episcopalian like Thyrza instead of a good pious Christian woman like Cousin Jemima.

Cousin Jemima gives a sniff of criticism on being escorted into the parlour. She has come prepared to pick holes in everything, and above all in Thyrza’s housekeeping, and hole picking is such a very easy occupation.

There are some people who never look for beauties, but are always on the *qui vive* for defects and blemishes in the works and doings of others. However, Cousin Jemima cannot say anything against the tastefully arranged table and the cozy room, nor can any improvement be suggested in the amber apple jelly which Cousin Jemima can hardly believe Thyrza has made herself from Mrs. Hislop’s receipt. Tea over, Cousin Jemima goes into the drawing-room and

looks under the chintz covers of the chairs to see whether there is anything underneath them besides chintz, while Thyrza and Mr. Dods are unpacking the purchases he has bought in Middleby. Mr. Dods decides he will not work at his "Antiquities of Carmylie" this evening, and, coming into the drawing-room, asks Thyrza for some music, and Cousin Jemima puts on her spectacles wondering whether Thyrza and Mr. Dods sit in the drawing-room regularly, and if it is not very expensive for the minister to burn so many coals, and it happens that when Thyrza, after playing divinely, turns round to inquire of her husband if he likes it, she finds he is fast asleep, and not only asleep but snoring. The minister's snore is a downright full-toned deep bass snore with a short snort at the end of it, and Cousin Jemima holding up a warning finger to Thyrza, says authoritatively, "hush!"

Thyrza, making no reply, takes her knitting and works slowly at the muffatee, sometimes stopping to play with a little Skye puppy, a descendant of Wasp's, and a very mischievous dog. Snap is a gift from Mrs. Ferrier, and consequently much prized by Thyrza. He has not been long in her possession and already has committed many misdemeanors. On the first Sunday of his arrival at the manse he chased the

poultry round and round the courtyard, finally sending the cock bang through the glass of the kitchen window. On the second Sunday he gnawed a new pair of the minister's slippers to pieces, and on the third he dragged Thyrsa's snuff-coloured bonnet downstairs and deliberately tore the flower which adorned it to bits.

Thyrsa hopes and trusts he will play no tricks on Cousin Jemima.

"Oh," says Thyrsa, after the minister has slept and snored for nearly two hours, during which she has not spoken one single word, "are not you dull, Cousin Jemima? I am awfully dull," and the girl tries to stifle a yawn out of politeness to her guest.

Dull with Cousin James in the house! Dull when she can listen to his sonorous snores! Dull when she is married! Dull when she is so highly connected! Dull when she could read "Blair's Sermons" or Young's "Night Thoughts" if so disposed! What can Thyrsa be thinking of?

"I am never dull," replies Cousin Jemima, thinking of the ungodly young man in the velvet shooting suit whom she had come upon in the gloaming, chatting so confidentially with the minister's wife, "a properly regulated mind can

always find employment, and a well conducted woman ought to require no other society than that of her husband."

Cousin Jemima sniffs when she has said this, and she wishes she might add that Thyrsa has need to take this home to herself, for it is only ill-constituted and badly regulated minds which experience attacks of dulness.

"Dear me!" remarks Mr. Dods, waking up and stretching himself. "I have not been asleep, have I? I am sure I have not. Do not let the fire down, dear, I will ring for Tibbie to bring some coals. It is very chilly to-night."

"Cousin Thyrsa has been complaining she was dull," says Miss Tod.

"I daresay she was, too, poor little dear," rejoins Mr. Dods. "You and I are two old fogies by the side of her."

"I am nearly seven years younger than you, Cousin James," answers Miss Tod, with considerable asperity, "and you do not think yourself an old man."

"Oh no, of course not," says Mr. Dods, again thanking Providence for giving him Thyrsa instead of Cousin Jemima, "but I have no doubt she wanted some amusement. When I have finished the 'Antiquities of Carmylie' I shall

teach you the moves of chess, my dear. What used you to do at Carmylie?"

"After the children's lessons were over in the evenings, Mrs. Napier and Monsieur, Mr. Ferrier and I used to play billiards and pool. There was a good table."

"Billiards!" cries Cousin Jemima.

"She can say no more. This is worse than novel reading, worse than dancing, worse than that love for gay colours as evidenced in the knot of scarlet ribbon fastening Thyrsa's collar, which forms so artistic a contrast with the dark grey of her dress, worse than talking over the fire with that young man Jack Ferrier. Truly, Thyrsa is far on the downward road to perdition. And Cousin James by no means manifests that horror and aversion which, being a minister, he ought to manifest. Cousin Jemima, good woman, she does not know that the minister himself is partial to billiards, but dares not confess such a fearful sin. Thyrsa, however knows it, the minister having once played at Carmylie. She is wiser than she was before her marriage, for she actually, although dying to shock Cousin Jemima, restrains her tongue, and Mr. Dods returns thanks by his eyes for her self-control. Nevertheless, Mr. Dods desires to keep in with Cousin Jemima. Thyrsa will have money it is

true, but there is this to be said about money, that it is one of those things of which one can scarcely have too much.

"I must have slept longer than I thought," says Mr. Dods, sneezing, "for I am very cold. We will try to have a more lively evening to-morrow, dear."

"Shall we have prayers now and the toddy afterwards?" asks Thyrza.

"Yes, dear, and put the dog out; yes, Thyrza, it will be best to send Snap into another room; the last time we had prayers, I unfortunately knelt down on his tail, and I fear, I very much fear, that the howl the little dog gave on that occasion, was the cause of Tibbie nearly choking herself."

After prayers Thyrza makes Cousin Jemima a strong jorum of toddy, and that lady is in a much more amiable condition than before. Before Thyrza quits her for the night, Cousin Jemima examines the sheets on the bed, and is relieved to find they are linen, not cotton. She inquires whether they have been properly aired, and seeing that everything has been done for her comfort, her prejudices against Thyrza begin to be somewhat mitigated. The incident of the Planchette has damaged Thyrza very much in her estimation, and neither of the maiden ladies

has forgiven her the supposed insult. The trouble Thyrza has evidently taken about her room goes some distance towards removing her dislike, and who shall say what effects the potent toddy may not have had!

“Humph!” she sniffs, “Cousin Thyrza, I should like a hot pig in bed.”

“A hot pig!”

“Yes, a hot pig; a hot bottle then, if you do not understand. They are handy things among cold sheets.”

“Thyrza, Thyrza!” calls Mr. Dods.

“Cousin James is calling you. The man is never at peace unless you are with him.”

“Yes, Mr. Dods,” says Thyrza.

“Cousin Jemima has all she wants?” he asks.

“She says she has.”

“Excellent pious Christian woman,” continues Mr. Dods, rubbing his shaven chin, “she has her little peculiarities, but we must excuse them and humour them at, ahem—her time of life.”

“She may be very excellent and so on,” returns Thyrza, “but it is a fact, I am glad Cousin Keren-Happuch has gone to Middleby to get a new set of teeth, and was therefore unable to come. Two of them together would have been too awful.”

“As long as you and she can get on for a few days, I do not object to your expressing these opinions to me. Will you make me a little more toddy, dear? I think it tastes better when you brew it for me. If you have five minutes to spare, I should like to read you a paragraph from the ‘Antiquities of Carmylie.’ ”

Thyrza has five minutes to spare, and the minister reads several paragraphs from the “Antiquities of Carmylie.” She thinks that she is very comfortable and very respectable, but if this is the normal condition of respectability and comfort, it is extremely monotonous. Most likely however it is in some way her fault. She must be very ungrateful to murmur and complain, when Providence has sent her so many blessings, and to feel dull when Mr. Dods is exerting himself to the utmost to amuse her, by reading copious extracts from that wonderful production, the “Antiquities of Carmylie.”





CHAPTER XIII.

DEAR MRS. DODS,—It will give us all much pleasure if you and Mr. Dods will dine with us this evening at half-past seven o'clock. We had heard Mr. Dods intended to make a long stay in Middleby, or the invitation would have been sent sooner. If you have any friends visiting you at the manse we shall be happy to see them also. With our united kind regards to Mr. Dods and yourself,

“ Believe me, dear Mrs. Dods,

“ Yours very sincerely,

“ CHARITY NAPIER.”

“ Dear me, how very unfortunate it is that I should have such a bad cold,” says Mr. Dods, entering the parlour about nine o'clock on the following morning; “Thyrza, dear—”

“ *She* is not down, Cousin James,” responds Cousin Jemima, with an intonation meant to awaken Mr. Dods to the fact that she is ready

waiting to receive him, while that unhallowed young woman most probably will not be downstairs for the next half hour. There are no virtues so admirable, so necessary for housewives as early rising and general punctuality—virtues Cousin Jemima has practised assiduously all her life, and yet Cousin James has not fallen in love with her. Truly, love is blind, and Cupid is well depicted with bandages before his eyes. Cousin James, however, does not awaken to Cousin Jemima's view of the case.

"She will not be long," he answers.

"It is very reprehensible for the lady of the house to be unpunctual," goes on Cousin Jemima. "Cousin Thyrza, although young, would find it excellent discipline to accustom herself to rise early and to be punctual."

"Who is taking my name in vain?" asks Thyrza, coming into the parlour in the middle of Cousin Jemima's exordium, looking as fresh as paint in her sober dark garb with natty white cuffs at her wrists, and a narrow white collar at her throat.

"You see we have missed you," says Mr. Dods, gallantly. "Nothing can be done without our fair lady."

Thyrza's words sound flippant and profane to Cousin Jemima, and she is astonished that Mr.

Dods encourages her in it, instead of administering a rebuke.

"I hope you slept well, Cousin Jemima," says Thyrza. "I chose that room for you, thinking you would like it, as it is well protected from the east wind."

Cousin Jemima wishes she could say she had not been comfortable, but as she cannot, she is forced to confess she did sleep well.

"Where will you sit? Do you like your back to the fire? Shall I place a screen for you?" pursues Thyrza. "We are going to have prayers directly. Oh, have you got a letter so early in the day? Who is it from? Mrs. Napier, I can tell at this distance from the scent."

"You, Cousin Jemima, will be able to go, dear; but I cannot, at which I am much disappointed."

"Would it not be more seemly to defer the discussion of frivolous matters until after we have united in family worship?" inquires Miss Tod. "You are very hoarse, Cousin James."

"Shall I read the sermon for you, Mr. Dods?" asks Thyrza, placing a Bible and a book of family prayers upon the table.

"Thank you, my dear, it is very kind of you," says Mr. Dods, turning over the leaves of a volume of sermons.

"Don't let it be a very long one," petitions his wife.

"Don't you like sermons?" wails Cousin Jemima.

"No, I can't bear them. Mr. Dods does not care much about them either, do you?" she says, putting the minister in a regular fix, for although he lets Thyrza into all his secrets, still he did not expect his private, particular predilections would be exposed before the gaze of Cousin Jemima of all people.

"We-ll," he replies, there is a possibility of having too much of a good thing. I don't think it would be quite prudent to say, my dear. Here is the place for you to begin reading."

"Oh, Snap has come in, he and Peter always fight. Tibbie, can you catch Peter?" exclaims Thyrza to Tibbie, who with the cook and Tammas the *orra* man have come in to prayers, and are sitting in a row, ranged on the sofa, Bibles in hand, in readiness to turn up the text of the sermon.

Snap is soon caught; but Peter, the black cat, shows more sport. He dodges in and out, under the chairs, and among the legs of the table, pursued by Tibbie on all-fours, calling alternately, "Pussy, pussy, pret-ty pussy. Oh, you wratch! Pussy, oh, you rogue! oh, you rascal!

Pussy, pussy," until, to Cousin Jemima's inexpressible scandal, Thyrza goes into a fit of laughter, and even the grave countenance of Mr. Dods is crossed by a smile.

"That will do, Tibbie," he says, at length. "Now, Thyrza dear, we are ready," looking towards his wife.

It is a very nervous thing to read aloud before a critical audience, more especially if you are unaccustomed to it, and if it is trying to read aloud a secular work, it is still more trying to read aloud from the Bible. Thyrza has recovered her composure, but she is almost as nervous about the sermon as she was about being married. However, she begins, and in rather a shaky, trembling voice, gets' over the text all right, the servants verifying it with their Bibles, and the minister fixing his eyes on her and listening to the sweet liquid tones of her voice as though he were drinking in every word she said.

Cousin Jemima fixes her eyes likewise on Thyrza; but she does not contemplate her in the manner in which the minister does. Thyrza is corrupting the minister's principles, perhaps even converting him to the Episcopalian religion. How are the mighty fallen! Thyrza finishes the sermon and starts Keble's morning hymn,

which the minister admires very much, and the tune and words of which she has taught the servants to sing. This is an innovation which shocks Cousin Jemima. It is French and theatrical—not to say it has a strong Popish flavour about it. Cousin Jemima feels very poorly during the singing of that hymn. Mr. Dods being too hoarse to read, Thyrza begins the prayer, at which all kneel down on the floor. Cousin Jemima groans to herself, then she groans audibly. Peter approaches her in an insinuating way, waving his black tail to and fro in an elegant arch, and leaping upon Cousin Jemima's back he takes a mean advantage of that poor lady's helpless condition and meanders up and down, sharpening his claws in her dress as he feels inclined, and purring loudly at the top of his voice in token of his satisfaction. The agony Cousin Jemima undergoes is simply inconceivable. Thyrza does not observe her predicament until she has very nearly stuck in the concluding words of the blessing, and then if it were to save her life, she cannot resist laughing. The servants go to the kitchen and Mr. Dods flips Peter out of the door with his handkerchief, and with as grave a face as he can muster, says—

“My dear, another time we must really see

that the pets are not in the room during prayers."

"I am very sorry, Cousin Jemima," pleads Thyrza; "but if you had seen the cat you would have laughed too."

"Peter is difficult to catch," adds Mr. Dods. "Will you come to the table, Cousin Jemima?" and he offers up a short prayer instead of grace.

"Now that we are settled," says Thyrza, "what is there in Mrs. Napier's letter? A little more coffee, Cousin Jemima? Mr. Dods, you are not looking after her properly."

"Mrs. Napier has invited us to dinner to-night."

"Cannot you come?" she asks, while Mr. Dods draws his chair beside hers; for he has abdicated his position as master of the house at the foot of the table, and at meals always sits by Thyrza's side.

"I have got a very bad cold and I should not like to be laid up for Sunday, so I fear I must deny myself for once. But that need not prevent you and Cousin Jemima from going."

"The frivolities of life have no charms for me," responds Miss Tod. "Our thoughts have naturally such a tendency downwards that I endeavour invariably to train mine heavenwards."

"Very excellent, very good, very true," answers the minister. "Still a little society is good for every person. There is nothing that I enjoy more than a well-managed dinner party, more especially if the guests are pleasant people, and they are likely to be so to-night."

"But I can go, can't I?" says Thyrsa. "I have not had any fun for an age."

"Had I been Cousin Thyrsa and you were suffering from a severe influenza cold, I could not have left you for any amusement, however enticing."

"Probably you would not, and your remark evinces the kindness of your disposition. But Thyrsa remaining at home could not cure my cold; and, dear me! I am very hoarse, I think I must apply a mustard poultice after breakfast."

"You should not have risen, Cousin James," cries Cousin Jemima, with tender affection. Now Mr. Dods will see the difference between the unselfish disposition of his idolizing cousin and the young, giddy, thoughtless girl he has married. "*I* will stay with you to-night, and Cousin Thyrsa can go to her dinner-party."

"Oh, I could not think of such a thing," returns the minister, a whole evening alone with Cousin Jemima not being a pleasing prospect.

“I was going to say that I should regret depriving you and Thyrza of the party, it is so seldom that there is any society here at this season of the year. Formerly, you are aware, I had the reputation of being a great wanderer from home, there being no attraction at the manse, now you will not find me absent for more than a day. I am working hard at the ‘Antiquities of Carmylie’ in order to finish it before the spring, when we expect Mrs. Hisiop and Robertina, and the boys are looking forward to some fishing. Thyrza, will you answer Mrs. Napier’s letter and accept the invitation for yourself and Cousin Jemima?”

“She need not accept it for me,” says Cousin Jemima, in a very determined manner. “You are seriously indisposed, Cousin James, and I should not be surprised if you were going to have a severe illness. I should recommend you to go to bed at once and have a basin of hot gruel.”

“Perhaps, then, I had better not go at all,” exclaims Thyrza, ruefully.

This is just what Miss Tod wishes to prevent. She wants Thyrza to go, and she will stay at home with Mr. Dods, and make him believe himself an ill-used man by wailing over the pomps and vanities of the world as shown in the person of Thyrza.

“ I have merely caught cold in travelling in a thorough draught from Middleby yesterday,” rejoins Mr. Dods, laughing heartily. “ One of the carriage windows would not shut tightly. All the old worn-out railway carriages are put on to the Queensmuir line, because it is a terminus station. I felt the wind catch the back of my neck. I shall be quite well by Sunday, if I stay in the house until then.”

“ It is best to take these things in time,” continues Cousin Jemima, plaintively, as though Mr. Dods were already at the last gasp.

“ So it is ; I am sure you are very kind. But please yourself, cousin ; and if you like to go, do so. Thyrza is going to help me this ‘morning in arranging my notes for the ‘Antiquities of Carmylie,’ and after dinner she will take you for a walk. The snow plough has cleared a path up the brae through the drifts to the Carmylie avenue.”

“ I brought a few tracts to distribute among the poor people of the village,” says Cousin Jemima, modestly. “ If you have no objection, I should much prefer visiting the families of the fishermen to any worldly distractions, which only unsettle the mind.”

Mr. Dods has no objection to Miss Tod visiting any number of the fisher folks, and

distributing as many tracts among them as she chooses ; but he has an objection to her remaining at home instead of going out to dinner. Of her solid excellence, her piety, her goodness, her desirable gas shares, there is no doubt ; but there is also no doubt of her excessive capacity for boring him. However, the invitation is reluctantly accepted for Thyrza alone. The object one longs for may be so discussed as to appear at last wholly distasteful, and Thyrza has lost all wish to go, from the observations of Cousin Jemima. She spends the morning with Mr. Dods, assisting him in arranging his manuscripts and looking up references in other antiquarian works. And in the afternoon, Cousin Jemima sallies forth with a basket on her arm, containing a couple of dozen tracts, to the fishing village.

“ Have you read those tracts I gave you the last time I was in the manse ? ” inquires Miss Tod of a blooming young matron in a picturesque cottage, surrounded by a group of fair-haired healthy children.

“ Aweel, I think I hae.”

“ Does Mrs. Dods ever give you any ? ”

“ Oh, na.”

Cousin Jemima is struck with the untidy appearance of the room, and moves unceremoniously to set it to rights.

“How do you like her?”

“Fine,” is the response. “She is real quiet and peaceable, and never makes no disturbance.”

“Does she visit you?”

“No vera muckle. She never comes spying and keeking roond and roond intil a body’s presses and cupboards. But when my laddie was hurt wi’ the reaping machine at the end o’ the hairst, she was real gude tae him, and brought him his denner every day. Oh, she is a fine bit lassie; and the minister, Tibbie says, is just as daft about her as he was afore they were married.”

“But don’t you ever see her?”

“Oh, there was whiles she went ilka day for a walk on the tap o’ the cliffs.”

“Mr. Dods, of course, was with her?”

“Na, he was taen up wi’ a muckle book he was writing.”

“I suppose she did not meet any one there?”

“Wha wad the lassie meet on the tap o’ the cliffs? You might walk till you came to Middleby by the cliffs, and no meet a man or a woman. The meenister is sair taen up about her. I didna see onything oot o’ the ordinary about her; but ye ken men-fouk see with other eyes frae women-fouk, and what we didna care for they do. They say her folks are awfu’

grand, and they are coming tae the manse gin the summer."

It is too true that men see with different eyes from women, otherwise Cousin Jemima had long ago been the happy wife of dear Cousin James. Cousin Jemima is so sadly disappointed that there is no peccadillo to be related against Thyrza, no speck or flaw to be descried, that she has not the heart to go to every cottage as she had intended doing, gleaning news of Thyrza's conduct and habits, and she regains the manse, somewhat crestfallen but not at all ashamed of her proceedings. Thyrza is sitting on the rug in the parlour, making the minister smile the playful antics of Snap and the wrath of Peter, who spits and swears from the cushion of the arm-chair; and the grey parrot, having been taught by Tom Hislop, when staying at the manse from one Saturday to Monday morning, also spits and swears enthusiastically.

"We have got quite a menagerie here," says Thyrza, springing into propriety on a chair, and dislodging Peter, "how good of you to visit all those poor people!"

"Cousin Jemima is a most excellent woman," chimes in the minister.

"I am afraid I am undeserving of your praise," answers Cousin Jemima.

"I never know what to say to the poor, excepting it is a fine day, and indeed I did get so into the habit of saying it, that one day I did stand under an umbrella when it was pouring, and say it is a fine day, and the woman at the shop said, yes, very fine. And then we both laughed. When Mr. Dods took me to see the congregation, I always asked how the children were, and sometimes the people had none. I used to say, well, how are you? And they said, well, how are you? And, then I said, it's a fine day, and they said it was fine, and when we had got as far as that we could go no farther, and we stood and stared at each other. How they did stare the first Sunday I went to the kirk! I thought there was a smut at the end of my nose, or else that they thought I was an escaped lunatic. Oh, is not Snap pretty? Has he not got dear little curly paws?"

"He is only a dog," observes Miss Tod, "and dogs have not souls."

"I often wish Snap had?"

"Too much fuss is made with dogs and pet animals now-a-days; one would think they were human beings," sniffs Miss Tod, sententiously.

"Everything should be in moderation," says Mr. Dods.

"Are not you coming, Cousin Jemima?" asks Thyrza, patting Snap, "it is time for us to dress."

"I shall not be lonely," interposes Mr. Dods, "as I shall retire early to rest. Bed is the best place for an influenza cold."

But Cousin Jemima is deaf to the attractions of Carmylie, the dinner, Lord and Lady George Boggs. What are all these compared with the bliss of several hours with Mr. Dods? Nothing, absolutely nothing. So Thyrza goes upstairs to dress, her heart throbbing and bounding with delight at the idea of being able to see Ferrier, if only for a few short minutes. She is in a fever of impatience to be off. There will be one glimpse of Paradise, and then will begin her everlasting fast. She arranges and re-arranges her pretty brown hair half a dozen times, she is so anxious to look her very best, and spends more time in surveying herself in the mirror than she did on her wedding day. After all, she is not satisfied with herself. Her face being paler than usual, and having accidentally discovered that barberries have a red juice in them, she squeezes some over her cheeks from a bunch in a vase, but after a moment decides on washing it off.

Mr. Dods sends up word by Tibbie that he

wishes to see how she looks before setting out, and when she has come to the conclusion her gown is pretty, she goes down to the parlour where Mr. Dods and Cousin Jemima are at tea.

“Where got ye that grand gown from?” exclaims Cousin Jemima; “why, you are prinked out like a princess, instead of a minister’s wife.”

“It was in one of the boxes which poor Mr. Mark brought home from China,” says Thyrza. “Is it too much?”

“Thy dress was like the lilies, and thou wert fair as they,” quotes Mr. Dods; “it is like one of those great Japan lilies Miss Lefroy has at Lillieshill, white powdered with gold, and that face above it is like the fragrance of the lilies.”

“That is the very prettiest compliment any one ever paid me,” smiles Thyrza.

“I think you ought to let me have a kiss for it,” says the minister. “Thank you, dear. Now, don’t stay late.”

“No, I won’t,” she promises; “I wish you were both coming with me, but you look very snug, and don’t let any one sit up for me.”

“Tibbie will go with you, my dear, and she and Tammis will bring you home. Half-past

ten will be late enough, since the affair of Gow one does not feel quite so secure as formerly ; it does not tend to reassure one that, in spite of the numerous police force, the villain has got off scot free, it is supposed, to America."





CHAPTER XIV.

THE dinner party does not differ from the general run of dinner parties in Kilniddryshire. There are the usual soups, joints, entrées, and the usual set of guests to be met with at every house in the county of the same standing as Carmylie. The only exception to this rule is Lillieshill, where the dinner is invariably unexceptionable, and the wines perfection : but then every one has not the time nor the money to devote to the study of what Mr. Lefroy calls the divine science of cookery. Any one who has lived two years or so in the neighbourhood of Queensmuir can guess within an ace the people he is likely to meet at dinner. At Carmylie there are Lord and Lady George Boggs ; they are deafer than ever, and would have been happier at home by their own fireside. Mrs. Napier, however, dearly loves a lord, and has persuaded them to come, Mr. and Mrs. MacNab

with Archie and Jane and Lola, and as a variety three girls from Middleby, rather vulgar, and four young men who have obtained leave of absence from Edinburgh Castle on the distinct understanding it is the last they will have for some time, otherwise complaints will be forwarded to head-quarters. As the balls and assemblies will soon begin in Edinburgh, they are not broken-hearted, and have passed several days at Quentinshope very much to their own satisfaction and that of the maternal instincts of Mrs. MacNab, she being continually on the look-out for *Eligibles*.

“What shall we do to amuse ourselves?” asks Charity when the ladies have left the dining-room and are collected round the fire. “We have plenty of time before us, as I am happy to say you are all going to stay over the night here. Dinner-parties break up so soon; generally when the stiffness is beginning to wear off. It seems absurd to dress oneself for an entertainment lasting scarcely three hours.”

Ferrier has “had it out” with Charity about the message she invented as his, but not to much purpose. She did not attempt to deny it at all. She had done it entirely for his good and that of Thyrza’s, dear girl; she had always been so

fond of her, and it grieved her to see so sweet a young creature tied down to the drudgery of teaching all day long, and she had tried to settle her advantageously. Jack could not say, as things were then, that it was not a good marriage for her. She had a kind husband who had insured his life heavily in her favour, and a charming little house, and it was very unkind and cruel of Jack to scold his poor sister. She had acted to serve his interests, nothing else; here Charity cried a little, and she looks very pretty with her eyelids quivering and her eyes filled with tears; she does the crying business well; she believed she had spared both Jack and Thyrsa much wretchedness, and who was to guess that Mark would fall over a rock at the top of the Witches Law, and break his back and leave his money to Ferrier. It was very cruel, very cruel indeed that her purest and highest motives should be misunderstood or misinterpreted. All of which did infinite credit to Charity's knack of managing things. She is wise in her generation, and ought to have lived when diplomatic talents were at a premium. Ferrier came away from his sister with the impression that while he and Thyrsa had been hardly treated by fate, Charity is an angel of goodness and humility.

“Round games are dull and stupid, and no one ever pays the forfeits,” says Lola.

“How nice a charade would be!” suggests Charity, “we could act at the other end of the room, bring in the screen from the dining-room to mark off the stage, and turn Jack’s study into a green-room. What do you think of it, Mrs. Dods?” appealing sweetly to Thyrza.

Mrs. Dods may look as pretty as she likes, and wear the most elegant gowns now. Charity acknowledges mentally that the white silk tissue, with gold coloured stripes, suits Thyrza, but do what she will, she is only old Dods’s wife at the best. He is too old to make a name in literature, and he has not the pluck to render himself famous by starting a new sect; the ministerial is not a profession in which it is possible to rise high or make money, and Thyrza must remain for the residue of her days shunted off from the pleasures and gaieties of the world at Carmylie fishing village. The minister is good for the next twenty years, he comes of a long-lived race, and when Thyrza is left a widow she will be long past the bloom of a woman’s life. Any feeling of dislike towards Thyrza has completely vanished since her success in marrying her safely out of the way; she can even see what she could not see before, that Thyrza is uncommon looking,

and as she observes it, she likewise reflects that Jack is so fastidiously honourable that there is no chance of his thinking of her now she is the minister's wife.

"I daresay it would be very nice," says Thyrsa.

"Are you talking of acting a charade?" asks Archie MacNab. "What would the minister say to that, Mrs. Dods?"

"When the cat's away, the mice will play," rejoins Charity, softly. "We won't tell any tales, shall we, Mr. MacNab?"

"I always do exactly as I like," answers Thyrsa, rather haughtily. "You can tell Mr. Dods as much as you wish."

"Supposing we act, who shall be the company?" proceeds Charity.

"You ought to be the guiding spirit of the whole."

"Oh, I am too timid and my powers of invention are very limited. No, I suggest that you and your sisters, and Mrs. Dods, and my brother act, while the rest of us form the audience. Davie and Rosie will show you the way to Jack's study, and you can consult there over your word."

"Now, Mrs. Dods, Lola, Jane, cudgel your brains for a word," drawls Archie, resplendent

as ordinary in the glories of a marvellously frilled shirt-front with diamond studs, when the "company" have withdrawn into Ferrier's study, where a looking-glass has been placed and a heterogeneous collection of bonnets, hats, old-fashioned costumes which belonged to the departed ancestors of the Campbells, rouge, and burnt cork are awaiting the intending actors. "A word, a word, my kingdom for a word."

"I never acted before," objects Lola. "What shall we say when we do appear on the stage?"

"Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, you will kindly imagine what this ought to be, as Tertius Hislop said in that wonderful speech of his at the Bank," answers Jane.

"Perhaps Mrs. Dods has got an inspiration from her learned husband," says Archie.

"Get the dictionary and choose the word which comes first when you open it."

"We shall never be able to act," protests Jane and Lola, in correct young lady chorus.

"Not half bad that about the dictionary," returns Archie. "Motion carried unanimously. Here goes. *Nobility*; that's the first that meets my fond gaze."

"Too long," says Ferrier; "how would you divide it?"

"No, that would be one syllable; *bil*, two; then *i*, and then *ty*, and the whole."

"It's too long. I have it, *Mistletoe*—which we will spell, *Miselt*oe—season of year for the shrub—the very thing."

"How will you do it?"

"Add another *s* to the first syllable and it will be *Miss*. Will you personate a married lady, Miss MacNab? I am sure you will act the part I am going to describe to perfection," continues Ferrier, with the peculiarly polite manner he always uses to a person towards whom he is completely indifferent. "You and your brother will be a Mr. and Mrs. Smith, who have a lovely daughter—indeed, two lovely daughters. The lovely daughters shall be Mrs. Dods and Miss Jane. I am suitor for one of these daughters—we will say Mrs. Dods. You and Archie are stern parents. Scene opens before going out for an evening party. You give the daughter instructions to receive no visitors in your absence. The suitor being denied entrance by the door, the chimney, or the window, is brought into the house in a wine-hamper. He makes love; the stern parents arrive unexpectedly. *Dénouement*."

"A 1," says Archie. "Then the second?"

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," replies Ferrier, going into the passage to speak to Cecilia.

“The orra man Tammas and Tibbie hae come frae the manse for Mistress Dods.”

“Give them some supper and send them home again,” answers Ferrier, at once, “and tell them I shall take Mrs. Dods to the manse myself,” and he returns to the study, where the actors are arraying themselves in the old costumes and are endeavouring to regard themselves in the mirror at one and the same time.

“Our company are rather long in coming,” remarks Charity; “amateur things are always slow. Professionals dress and change their dresses with almost miraculous rapidity.”

No one can make a pleasanter hostess than Charity can when it pleases her to be pleasant, and it pleases her to do the amiable to-night. She is exquisitely dressed, as is her wont. No one ever saw Charity in an ill-fitting gown, or an ugly or unbecoming shade of colour or bonnet. She has on a very dark purple dress of a thin material, made with countless frills and trimmings, a tint chosen with regard to her pink and white skin and flaxen hair, the dark purple making her look fair as alabaster, and suggesting the comparison to some stately flower robed in purple. It always puts Charity in a good temper to know she is looking better than the other women in the room, and to feel assured that her petti-

coats hang, as they ought to do, in a better style than those of her neighbours. The only things which really "fetch" Charity, are an awkward man or a still more awkward woman treading on her train, or the suspicion that another individual of her own sex is occupying more of the men's attention than herself. These two things "fetch" Charity amazingly. Being wonderfully amiable, she exerts herself to arrange a card-table for the seniors of the party, and sitting down near Lord George, spreads out her dress in a graceful manner, which could not be eclipsed by any woman in Kilniddryshire. Being wise in her generation she has made the most of the advantages Nature has bestowed upon her, and she does the same now when she settles her draperies, so as to make the most of them and of herself, and begins a delicate piece of point-lace work, which shows off her rings and the beauty of her white, taper, jewelled fingers. The card-players leave off their whist when Davie calls out that the actors are ready and the curtain is about to be withdrawn. In this case the screen represents the curtain, and it requires a little care in folding together. The removal of the screen having been safely accomplished, Archie and Lola MacNab are discovered seated by a table. Both are so altered by the

addition of pearl powder, rouge, blackened eyebrows, and powdered hair, as to be scarcely recognisable.

“Our youngest daughter gives me great anxiety,” says Archie. “I fear she will make a low marriage.”

“She does the same to me. She is so differently conducted from our eldest darling, Miss Penelope Smith.”

“I shall certainly break some of their heads, I mean the heads of some one; no, no; what I wish to say is that I shall break the head of that audacious gamekeeper who has dared to presume to the hand of my daughter.”

“We are going to dine with the Duchess of Carrabas to-night.”

“We do not go until I have given a large piece of my mind to Fwidoline on the subject of Hanton, the keeper,” rapping on the screen with his stick. “Penelope, my love; Fwidoline, the disobedient.”

Enter Thyrsa and Jane.

“Your adorable mother and myself and Penelope are going to dinner at the Duchess of Carrabas’s. As your conduct is ill-pleasing to us we leave you behind, and hope to find you more contrite about the Marquis. We have given instructions to all the domestics to refuse

admittance to that wascal Hanton. He can hardly get down the chimney, and the windows are nailed up or down, I am uncertain which term is wight. Both, I think. Penelope, my angel, come along; Fwidoline, should I hear that low cad of a Hanton has been here both you and he shall perish."

Thyrza plays the piano and sings, "Love, the Pilgrim." Enter Cecilia and Ratray, dragging a long wine-hamper into the room. They set it down in silence and depart. Thyrza ceases playing and advances to the hamper.

"For Fridoline, poor unhappy Fridoline, what can be in it? Something very large, the hamper is so big. I must open it," and she cuts the strings which fasten down the lid with a knife.

A rustling is now to be distinguished, and suddenly Ferrier, dressed in his Chinese shooting suit, springs out, gun in hand.

"My darling Thy—Fridoline!" he exclaims. "They barred the doors and windows and chimneys against me, but 'Love laughs at locksmiths.'"

"Alas, monsieur, my Hanton, if they should find thee here we are both undone."

"They shall not find us here, we shall have gone. Let us fly together."

“Ah, but where shall we fly to, and what shall we live on when we have flown?”

“An honest heart and a hundred a-year.”

“That will hardly keep you in cigars.”

“Cruel one, I will sing you a song to soften your heart, and who knows but that the *pater* and *mater* will yet come round :

“The fountain mingles with the river,
And the river with the ocean ;
The winds of heaven mix for ever,
With a sweet emotion.
Nothing in the world is single,
All things by a law divine,
In one another’s being mingle,
Why not I with thine ?”

Ferrier has a peculiarly clear enunciation, and one merit of his singing is, that although there is nothing remarkable about his voice, not a syllable is lost on the hearer.

“See the mountains kiss high heaven,
And the waves clasp one another,”

he continues, extending his arm to Thyrsa, and his eyes, cold and steeled in their look to all but Thyrsa, grow soft—voice and words and manner may be controlled, but the real expression of the soul looks out through the eyes—and he proceeds to deliver the final glowing apostrophe with a passion and fervour evidently meant, not for

the company in general, but solely addressed to Thyrsa—

“No sister flower would be forgiven,
If it disdained its brother,
And the sunbeams clasp the earth,
And the moonbeams clasp the sea,
What are all these kissings worth,
If thou kiss not me? If thou kiss not me?”

As he finishes he puts his arms round her and kisses her, and Lola, who has been waiting behind the screen with Archie for the conclusion of the scene, rush in, shrieking aloud, “Miss, Miss, Miss, is this the way you conduct yourself when I am from home! Murder! fire! thieves! policemen! Turn this villain out of the house,” and Archie makes his exit, dragging Ferrier after him.

“Got through that all right,” says Archie. “You came it strong in the love-making. Old Dods might have objected had he been here.”

“It looked very real,” adds Lola.

“I am glad it did,” returns Ferrier. “Second syllable *el* to be considered.”

“Could we not make some use of this gorgeous Albanian costume of blue velvet and silver gauze sleeves?” asks Jane.

“Properly speaking the story ought to run through all the syllables. I am afraid we can’t do that,” says Ferrier, “*el* what?”

“Is there not some chap called El Kadir who kicks up shindies somewhere or another?” inquires Archie.

“Yes, I think so. Arab chief. Come, MacNab, and let me paint your face for you. It’s as oily as a duck’s back or an unprepared photo, and won’t take the paint a bit.”

Archie is put into the Albanian costume and the actors return to the drawing-room just as Lord George and Mr. MacNab are involved in an animated discussion on the merits of the various cattle, sheep and pigs, respectively and collectively their properties; the best modes of fattening them; the best makers of oil-cake, and other preparations, and the advantages of guano and bone manure for certain kinds of soil.

“I had fifty yards of a drill in a turnip-field dressed with artificial manure at the rate of one-and-a-half cwt. guano and three cwt. of dissolved bones per acre,” roars Mr. MacNab into Lord George’s ear-trumpet.

“What?” answers Lord George, turning the trumpet nearer to Mr. MacNab, and shading his ear with his spare hand.

“Fifty yards of a drill.”

“What in?”

“Turnip-field dressed with artificial manure,”

shouts Mr. MacNab, lustily, "at the rate of——"

"Archie!" says his wife, shaking her much-bedizened head at him, as though he had been a naughty boy. Mrs. MacNab can never forget that her husband is the son of a weaver and a cook—a cook, too, who once held that responsible position at Carmylie—the identical house in which he now sits at his ease, a moneyed and landed proprietor. However, landed proprietors are not to be picked up every day in Kilniddryshire; and although Mrs. MacNab cannot forget that her husband's father was called Deil MacNab, in Queensmuir; she forgives it, for she is fond of her husband and his money. This forgiveness does not prevent her from occasionally remarking to her daughters that it would be more "refined and genteel if Mr. MacNab would learn a few French phrases with which to adorn his conversation." But Mr. MacNab is far too sensible a man to do anything of that kind, and has gained the respect of the Kilniddryshire "bigwigs" for his sterling sense and quiet manners. The actors have now come back, and present themselves in the guise of veiled Eastern women and a dervish—Archie, as El Kadir, in their midst. They walk solemnly round El Kadir holding tankards filled with claret, that it

may not be a Barmecide feast; and Ferrier proposes the health of El Kadir, which is drunk *con amore*. After which, to the general surprise and amusement, El Kadir comes forward and, in excellent broad Scotch for a Bedouin chief, sings a song written for one of the Edinburgh pantomimes—an universal favourite for some time afterwards among the young men and boys in that city.

“A braw, braw, toon is oor Auld Reekie,
A grand auld toon is oor Auld Reekie,
Ae half new and tither half anteecky,
Row-dow-de-dow, oor Auld Reekie!”

“*Miss* is evidently the first syllable,” remarks Mrs. Ferrier, when the second syllable is announced as finished. “Have you any idea, Lady George, what the last one is?”

“I have guessed the word,” says Mr. Mac-Nab.

“I wish you would tell me,” answers Charity, “I am so silly about charades, and enigmas, and conundrums. Do tell me?” with an enchanting smile.

“It is only your modesty which induces you to say so. Did you ever hear the reason why Adam never had the measles when he was a little boy?”

"No, I never did. I wonder what it can be. I told you I was so stupid about these kind of things. What was the question?"

"Why Adam never had the measles when he was a little boy," shouts Mr. MacNab into Lord George's trumpet, Lord George having shown signs he wishes to be taken into the conversation.

"Very peculiar," says Lord George, not having heard distinctly, "when Adam was a little boy."

"Because, of course, Adam never was a little boy," explains Mr. MacNab.

"Oh, of course. These things are so simple when one knows how to do them."

"We've got through two syllables tolerably," Ferrier is saying to Archie in his study. "How about the third—*toe*?"

"Fellow with pet corn," replies Archie, thinking the get-up of El Kadir not unbecoming to his tall figure, and blonde hair and complexion. "I'll be an old gentleman with an only daughter. I have the gout, and come in leaning on Mrs. Dods's arm. She asks after my poor feet. I am in towering rage. You come to call, tread on my foot—mind you don't do it in reality—and I swear I will sue you for damage done to my toe."

The screen is removed for the third time to show an apparently aged man with a night-cap on, a large dressing gown of Ferrier's, carpet slippers borrowed from Rattray, and a surprisingly red and white face. He hobbles along on Thyrza's arm, and is assisted by her into a chair.

"Dear papa, how are your poor feet? Are you much troubled with rheumatism this evening?"

"Poor feet!" says Archie, with well acted ferocity. "There is nothing the matter with my feet. A little rheumatism in my toe-joint. That's all; that's all."

"A gentleman come to call, sir," announces Lola, attired as a housemaid in a clean print with a fascinating cap in which she looks far prettier than in her evening dress.

"How are your poor feet?" asks Ferrier.

"Why are you bothering about my feet? What is it to you?" exclaims Archie, "I can walk as well as you can, if not better," hobbling up and down. "What! what a twinge of gou——rheumatism. What have you come here for?"

"To request you to oblige me with the loan of a five-pound note, and the gift of your lovely daughter."

"You'd better hook it, sir; if you don't want to be assisted by the fine point of my toe, sir."

Whew ! Drat these rheumatics ! Ask for my daughter, sir ! Whew ! and my money, sir ? What next, and who next ?”

“ Please, sir, the lum’s a-lowe !”* cry Lola, Jane, Davie, and Rosie, running on to the stage together, “ and all the dinner is spoiled.”

“ Send for a steam-engine to put it out—run, tear, rush, shoot !” shouts Archie, hopping along by the aid of a stick. “ Whew !” as Ferrier treads on his foot. “ You’ve broken my toe, sir. I’ll have you before the police. A thousand pounds compensation, sir, for the damage done to my toe. Whew !”

“ Word guessed ; word guessed,” calls Mr. MacNab. “ Mistletoe, is it not ?”

“ Yes. I thought you would find it out ; it’s such an easy word.”

“ Capital one though for Christmas time.”

“ Which scene did you like best ?”

“ The first. There was most in it, and Mr. Ferrier did the love-making well.”

“ I thought of having a little dance now,” says Charity.

“ I must just take off this rouge and pearl powder ; it makes a fellow’s face so hot,” observes Archie. “ And then, Mrs. Dods, if the minister has not forbidden dancing, may I have

* *Anglice*, “ The chimney’s on fire.”

the pleasure of the first dance with you? A fellow cannot exactly dance in a nightcap, you know?"

"I shall be very happy," says Thyrza; "but what o'clock is it?"

"Are you bound to be home at any particular time?"

"Yes, Mr. Dods said half-past ten."

"Oh, that was ridiculous," replies Ferrier; "he could not expect you back so soon."

"What o'clock is it?" she asks, earnestly.

"It will never be half-past ten o'clock again on the 29th December, 1872," he answers.

"Is it much later?"

"No," he returns, hesitatingly. "You must have a few dances before you go. You are engaged to MacNab for the first. Give me the second? Old Dods is not alone; he has that ancient tabby cat to keep him company, has he not? It will break up our party entirely if you go now; and for once in a way I don't think he can object." Then he motions her to a table at the far end of the room and opens a book of photographs of foreign scenery.

"You won't have the chance of spending another evening with me, Thyrza, or dancing with me again. Are not these pretty *cartes*,

nice light on the castle of Chillon and the mountains? You won't have the chance of refusing me again, because——"

"Oh, monsieur, why?" she cries.

"Because I am going out to China by the next mail, which leaves Liverpool on the 31st, the day after to-morrow. I start from Carmylie to-morrow morning. Lennox has sent for me on account of a row some of our men have got into with some of another merchant's, and he can't get the mandarin to listen to reason unless I go. Luckily, the house for my mother is taken in London, and she can get into it in February. Now, darling, will you not stay with me a few minutes' longer, when we shall have the sea between us so soon?"

"Going away!" she exclaims, letting the book fall with a great crash on to the floor. "Oh, monsieur, I cannot dance to-night."

"Why not, Thyrsa?" he asks, stooping down and picking up the book, and as he does so he manages unseen by the rest of the people in the room to press the hem of her gold-and-white gown to his lips.

"How could I dance when you are going away?" she says; "I must go home, monsieur."

"And leave me? I shall not have time to come and bid you and the minister farewell, for

my mother will want every moment I can give her, and I have all my traps to pack."

"I want to go home, monsieur. It came so suddenly, so unexpectedly."

"Well, then, you shall. Mother," going up to Mrs. Ferrier, with the caressing way he often adopts in speaking to the gentle old lady, the apple of whose eye he has always been in good report and bad report, from the time when he broke his toys to see what was inside them to the present moment, when he has sacrificed all his capital, and made himself a poor man, in order to pay the debts of his father who had never loved his son, nor done him justice, "Mother, Mrs. Dods is tired and wishes to go home."

"Have not Tammas and Tibbie come for me, Mrs. Ferrier?" asks Thyrsa. "Mr. Dods said he would send them for me at half-past ten."

"My dear, it is nearly half-past twelve now."

"Have they been waiting all that time?" exclaims Thyrsa. "Oh, what will Cousin Jemima say? Perhaps," she adds, as a consolation and an afterthought, "she may have gone to bed and not sat up for me."

"Mr. Dods will not be displeased, will he?"

says Mrs. Ferrier, alarmed, lest she should inadvertently have brought the girl into trouble with her husband. "I have always heard he was so goodnatured."

"Oh yes; so he is—it is Cousin Jemima."

"Who is she?"

"A second or third cousin of Mr. Dods. I wish she had married him herself, as she seems to wish too that she had."

"Mrs. Dods, I hear you are meditating the treason of going home without giving me my dance. I call that shabby. Listen to that waltz!" as Mrs. MacNab, no mean musician, begins one of the German waltzes, so sad and so charming for dancing, and Thyrza's little feet unconsciously beat time.

"I'm so late, Mr. MacNab, I do love dancing too."

"Going now won't make you any earlier, in for a penny, in for a pound. May as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb; it's hanging either way."

Mrs. Ferrier does not press Thyrza to stay, for the reason she understands better than Archie the misery her remaining so late without her husband may eventually lead to, and she also understands that Cousin Jemima, having wanted the minister for herself, will be only too ready

to make mischief between Mr. Dods and his young wife. So she takes Thyrza to her room to put on her wraps, and wishes she might venture to ask whether she is happy at the manse in the society of her elderly husband.





CHAPTER XV.

WITH pardonable vanity, Thyrsa does not pin up her skirts; and having been wrapped in a large shawl, and made to drink some mulled claret, she reaches the hall, decorated with wreaths of evergreens and letters of holly sewn on pink calico adorning the walls, a triumph of art invented by Rattray. She says good night to the guests, and Mrs. Ferrier, kissing her warmly, promises to call at the manse before long. Ferrier is in the hall, working himself into the arms of an Ulster before the stove fire.

“Have you enough on?” he says, throwing over her shoulders a cloak of the furs which line the Russian Emperor’s mantles, soft as a kiss and black as night. “You will not find this too heavy to-night. The frost is intense.”

And they go out into the moonlight on to the gravel sweep. Outside they can hear the shuffle

of the dancers' feet across the floor, the gay laughs and merry voices, and lively music of a reel—the reel of Hoolachin, played by Mrs. MacNab, celebrated throughout the county for her rendering of Scotch dance music and the magnificent time she keeps.

There has been a heavy fall of snow, lasting several days, succeeded by a hard frost. The woods and mountains, the stacks in the steading, and the roofs of the farm-buildings, and the cottages at the fishing village, and the mossy graves in the kirkyard, are glistening white, and are strewn with powdered brilliants in the moonbeams. The moon hangs in a sky as “darkly, deeply, beautifully blue” as on the fairest June night that ever looked down upon a summer world of loveliness and roses ; it shines now upon a white world—upon the vast solitary moorland, the empty snowy fields stretching far away, the silver-coated crags of the Witches Loch, the long reach of cliffs and promontories jutting out upon the sea, upon the snow-laden pine woods, upon the white expanse of earth, marred only in its quiet beauty by sheep tracks and the frozen footsteps of half-starved-out birds and hares and rabbits. The stars are twinkling over the still white peaks of the hills. The northern streamers shoot upwards to the zenith green and crimson

scirri, or pillars of light, transparent as thin veins of shadowy gauze, having a tremulous motion, while through the gleaming translucent mist the shining lamps of heaven flash and sparkle. To all appearance there is no wind. Not a breath disturbs the green pine branches, "each bearing its burden" of snow; nothing stirs the peace of the skeleton boughs of the larches and beeches: and yet if you were to listen very intently, you might hear a humming, humming noise—very gentle, very soft, and very soothing—like the dreamy buzz of a spinning-wheel. It seems as though the stillness of the earth found a voice, and was talking to you. In winter, on the quietest night, this humming sound is always heard at Carmylie, and it may also be heard at Queensmuir.

"What a rate you are walking at, to be sure!" says Ferrier; and he draws her to him, while she gathers her dress round her, and wishes she had pinned it out of her way; "do you want to get rid of me so soon?"

"No, monsieur, I do not," arresting her hasty impetuous steps.

"I suppose this will be our last walk together. Do you think that you and I shall ever walk together again as we are doing now?"

"Will not you come back soon?" she asks,

and Ferrier places his hand upon hers, which is resting on his arm.

"No, it is on the cards I shall be away fifteen, if not twenty years."

"Oh, that is a lifetime!"

Fifteen or twenty years without a chance of seeing him, years during which she will be living or vegetating at the manse, and she does so love this man, and has been parted from him by the vile scheme and treachery of his sister. The thought is unendurable.

"Should you be sorry if we never met again?" he proceeds, feeling he will not be able to stand this much longer without overstepping the bounds within which he has sworn to remain.

"Can you ask me, monsieur?" she says reproachfully, in the low, sweet ringing tones which had been the first thing he had noticed about her when she stood in her old faded yellow gown among the strolling players in the billiard-room of the Flying Dragon at Villios. There is so much in a voice, and Thyrza's is singularly musical.

Then Ferrier finds he cannot trust himself to speak, and they walk without uttering another word through the moonlight flooded grey aisles of the pine trees, along the path cut out in the drifted snow, down the brae to the manse. The

little fishing village is at rest, only one light shines from the window of a cottage wherein a woman is walking up and down with a fretful infant. The dead in the kirkyard are taking it easily too. They do not shiver in the biting cold, nor bemoan themselves at the piercingly bitter frost, or if they do complain no one hears them from their narrow dark resting places beneath the soft winding-sheet of snow which lies above their pulseless, nerveless, dreamless heads. Many of them have been so long occupants of the kirkyard that they have grown accustomed to their strait abiding places, and all changes of the seasons and weather; and even the new comers seem used to the splash of the rain on the daisies and grass above them, and the rush and ripple of the waves over the seaweed and rocks.

“How soon we have got here!” says Thyrza, pausing at the front door of the manse.

“Darling, it is very soon, and the worst of it is that we have to say good-bye.”

“And you really are going away?”

“I have no choice, it’s a case of necessity.”

“Oh, monsieur!”

“Come with me, Thyrza, darling,” he cries, throwing overboard the restraints which had formerly hampered him; “after all, you were mine

before you were his. Come with me, darling !”

The temptation is great, almost irresistible. She loves him so much, and he loves her as a man of his character “just once may love.” He is going away, perhaps for ever. Had it not been for a craftily-invented lie she might have been at this time his honourable wife. He has longed for her, she sees it in his eyes, hears it in his voice. Weeks before his love was told in words she knew it by intuition. She had never altered the style of her hair or taken more than ordinary trouble with her appearance without seeing the result of the effect in the expression of Ferrier’s eyes.

“Come with me, my own darling,” he goes on. “You will come? your silence gives consent. Go to Middleby to-morrow by the morning train and ask for a sitting-room at Fisher’s Hotel. I will come for you there in the afternoon. A steamer sails from the East Dock at six o’clock P.M. for Liverpool, and we shall have time to see a little of that city before starting for China. We shall catch the mail steamer nicely. She is lying in one of the dry docks at Birkenhead. Sweet one, you will come?”

“I don’t know,” she stammers, for the temptation is very strong, and she is hesitating between right and wrong, a hesitation which

cannot do any good, as wrong can never be twisted into right by any amount of reasoning. As Addison says, in his "Cato,"—"When love once pleads admission to our hearts (in spite of all the virtue we can boast), the woman that deliberates is lost."

"You will come?" he whispers, in his rich deep voice, and the words and accent are mightily persuasive to the girl who is so devotedly attached to him, and has been willing to give even her life for his sake.

"I should like to, monsieur, but——"

"You will come?" he says again. "What a deal of persuasion you take, darling. Is it so great a hardship to come with me? I have enough money now for both of us, and by heavens! I can't get on without you." Then, seeing she has moved to the porch and opened the door left unbolted by Tibbie in anticipation of the return of her mistress—"In case of mistakes or accidents you had better give the name of Jones. There are cartloads of Joneses in the world, and no one will recognise you under that, as they might do under that of Dods. I shall ask for Mrs. Jones."

"But what shall I say about going to Middleby to-morrow?"

"Say you want to shop. Women always do

want to shop, it is quite a valid excuse. Fisher's Hotel is near the East Gate, not far from the docks and the railway station. Any one will tell you where it is if you ask them."

A certain rap, rap, on the window-pane, as if a finger cased in a thimble, or some similar hard substance, now comes, and on looking up Ferrier and Thyrza perceive a figure in a night-cap, holding a candle in her hand—the figure, in truth, of Cousin Jemima. The frosty moonlight is clear and bright, the dark shadows of the manse and kirk fall sharply defined on the snow, and Cousin Jemima has no difficulty in recognising the ungodly young man who told Thyrza she pinned her collars straighter than she did formerly. Cousin Jemima's feelings are so greatly roused that it would refresh her considerably could she pour a jug of cold water on the heads of the impious Ferrier and the more impious Thyrza, as she had lately done on those of the maid-of-all-work and her sweetheart, which sweetheart had pestered Cousins Jemima and Keren-Happuch until they resolved some desperate measures should be taken to put a stop to such evil courses on the part of the aforesaid maid-of-all-work.

"Old cat!" says Ferrier, "you will be out of her clutches by to-morrow night."

By this time he understands Thyrza well enough to make no attempt to detain her. She has *not* said she will meet him in Middleby, neither has she given any such promise, yet Ferrier would stake his existence on the hazard that she does come. The hours of the evening have fled on golden wings to Thyrza; but to the minister and Cousin Jemima, left *tête-à-tête* at the manse, they have revolved on a leaden axis. She has not found Mr. Dods nearly so pleasant nor so interested in her spiritual condition now he is a married man. He even interrupted her in the middle of a minute description of her religious sensations by wondering who would be at the dinner at Carmylie. Surely this of itself was sufficient to prove how Thyrza had corrupted that man of true piety. Mr. Dods had not spent an evening without his wife since that of his wedding-day, which had been passed by compulsion in the society of the sick old woman up the glen, and he misses her dreadfully. Cousin Jemima has never bored him so much before. He knows all her spiritual peculiarities by heart, her way of calling herself a poor, weak, wicked woman, that he may contradict her and say she is a good pious Christian woman, and to confess the honest truth, the minister is heartily tired of good Cousin Jemima. To deliver himself from

her society he pleads the excuse of his cold and goes to bed, not before Cousin Jemima has changed from her religious feelings to make several remarks on the subject of sensible, discreet women, and their advantages over young, giddy girls.

Now, every allowance ought to be made for Cousin Jemima. Undoubtedly she is good, and very exemplary. She has been brought up in the most rigid of rigid Calvinistic principles such as the ministers of the present day, unless in isolated country districts like Carmylie, scarcely venture to preach to their congregations. She has been taught to believe all amusements, especially dancing and theatricals, are truly obnoxious and put forth by Satan. Some individuals do not believe in Satan now-a-days. Cousin Jemima does. Then she has been in love with the minister for years, and such being the case is not disposed to be fond of Thyrza. Cousin James is so much under the wiles and witcheries of this half foreign girl that, poor man, he does not see her faults. But Cousin Jemima sees them. She has arrived at this reflection when Jemima and Tibbie come back to say "the laird will bring the mistress hame himsel!"

Mr. Dods has gone to bed, otherwise Cousin

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Jemima would have said something regarding her opinions of Thyrza and the laird. As next best thing, she scolds Tibbie and Tammas well for leaving Carmylie without Thyrza, and on going to her bedroom discovers Snap comfortably curled up at the foot of her bed. Poor Snap wonders where he has got to when a rough hand pulls him out by the scruff of his neck and administers a severe chastisement. The little hairy terrier is much surprised at first, the only beating he has had before consisting of a pocket-handkerchief being carefully drawn across his back. As it continues, he howls long and dolefully, betaking himself to a mat in the hall on the conclusion of his punishment.

“He’ll not come with dirty paws to my clean quilt again in a hurry, I suspect,” says Cousin Jemima, tying her nightcap strings under her chin.

When Thyrza comes into the hall after parting with Ferrier, Snap trots to meet her, prostrates himself on his back, dog-fashion, gets up, wags his tail, howls, and prostrates himself again to explain in dumb show that he has behaved badly and had his deserts. Thyrza catches the little bundle of fur in her arms, and goes up to the drawing-room, where she knows Cousin Jemima is waiting for her. Cousin Jemima is not lovely in the daytime when in her newest attire, and

she is less lovely in her night-cap and corkscrew curl-papers. The fire is dead out, and the pretty room has assumed that neglected, untidy appearance which blinds drawn crookedly to the top of the windows, the rug kicked up, the chairs and tables awry, and nothing in the grate but black cinders and white ashes, will so soon impart to the prettiest room.

Cousin Jemima was not going to keep in the fire for Cousin Thyrsa, wasting Cousin James's coals. Thyrsa's first action is to put Snap down and tidy the room. Cousin Jemima has not spoken yet, but she sighs loudly. If there is one thing more irritating than another, it is to be sighed at. And Cousin Jemima's sigh is an excellent specimen of the irritating sigh which is enough to drive a man out of his senses.

"I am very late," says Thyrsa, having reduced the drawing-room to order. Her former want of neatness came from no one having explained to her the necessity of that quality; "but I could not get away sooner," and she pats Snap, who is still endeavouring to make her understand he has been ill-treated; "he was a little dog, he was a nice little dogsy, wogsy, poggy, wog."

Cousin Jemima sniffs and delivers herself of a groan which appears to pervade her all over.

It is terrible to hear her sigh, but it is much more terrible to hear her groan.

“Do you know what o’clock it is?” she at length condescends to ask.

“About the small hours of the morning,” returns Thyrza, much annoyed at Miss Tod’s manner in calling her, a married woman, to account, and, consequently, determined to annoy her in turn. Kind words and gentleness always melt Thyrza, but scolding has only the effect of rendering her hard as a stone. She will be led, but not driven. Cousin Jemima’s principle is to drive people, not to lead them. She has not read the fable of the sun and the old man and his cloak. Then Thyrza tries to make an excuse for the acid temper of Miss Tod, “We had a pleasant evening and acted a charade.”

“Acted! oh, Cousin Thyrza, and did you act?”

“To be sure, and great fun it was. I was dressed up as an Eastern woman. I wish you had been there to see.”

“But I am thankful I was spared the melancholy sight of beholding the wife of my estimable Cousin James parading about like a merry Andrew, or a going-about body with a circus.”

This is not encouraging.

"I daresay there are as many good people among the circus performers as there are among people who think themselves much better than others," answers Thyrza, with a provoking accent on the word "think."

"Where will you end, Cousin Thyrza, where will you end?"

"In bed, I hope, for I am sleepy, and you must be so too. I asked that no one might sit up in case I should be late."

"Fatigue is nothing in comparison of my duty."

"What is the matter with you, Snap?" says Thyrza, abruptly. "I'll light your candle for you, Cousin Jemima. I told Tibbie to keep a good fire for you in your room."

"Snap is crying because I took the liberty of whipping him for lying on my clean quilt," returns Cousin Jemima, primming up the corners of her mouth.

"You dared to touch my dog while I was away," exclaims Thyrza, her anger rising in spite of herself. "Poor dear little Snap, she shan't hurt you again."

"I forgive you, Cousin Thyrza," pursues Miss Tod, with lofty superiority. "Your language is not becoming, but I forgive you, as you are but a young giddy girl, and it is well that you have

time before you in which to repent of your follies."

Thyrza bites her lips. She has given no promise to Ferrier yet, but she has only to go, and the arms of the man she loves will receive her. "Come with me, darling," sounds in her ears. Still, she controls her temper, lights a candle for Cousin Jemima, investigates the condition of her fire and the hot bottle, in which Tibbie, out of revenge for the rebuke administered in no measured terms, has contrived to undo the cork, so that the contents must have run out on the first movement of Cousin Jemima. That lady offers to kiss Thyrza, but she declines the honour.

"You don't like me," she says, "and I don't like you."

"I shall pray for you, Cousin Thyrza," she answers, "and I trust you may be brought to a better frame of mind."

Thyrza makes no reply to Cousin Jemima's aspiration, and leaving her, goes to her own room.

"Wee-l, Thyrza," says the minister, sleepily, "I would have sat up for you, but Cousin Jemima became too much for me, and fairly drove me to bed. I have been thanking Providence for bestowing such an angel as you upon

me instead of Cousin Jemima. Who was at Carmylie?"

"Lord and Lady George Boggs, &c."

"Did they ask after me?"

"Oh, everybody did that, and they were disappointed you were not there."

"What did you have for dinner?"

"I don't remember—soups, fish, and so on."

"Was it a good dinner?"

"Very good, indeed. How is your cold?"

"Much better, thanks, dear. I took a tumbler of toddy, and went to bed at half-past nine, and I think I must have slept until now. Now, come to bed, dear, you look pale and tired. Late hours do not suit you."

"No, I do not think they do."

The minister is soon asleep and snoring, but Thyrza is too agitated and restless to close her eyes. She lies awake listening to every hour striking, and sees the silver moonbeams creep from bar to bar of the window until "the moon sets, and the dark comes over all."





CHAPTER XVI.

YOU will stay the night at the Bank, dear," says Mr. Dods, wrapping a thick rug round Thyrsa and Cousin Jemima in the gig, while admiring groups of fishwives and small urchins stand looking on at a respectful distance from the wicket-gate leading into the manse garden. "Cousin Helena will be delighted to see you. If the gig would hold more than two persons I should have accompanied you to Middleby. As it is, good Cousin Jemima will favour you with her society during the journey. Present my sympathy to Aunt Kezia, Cousin Jemima. It is indeed a sad affliction of Providence, but the ways of Providence are inscrutable."

"I will do so, Cousin James."

"You will return with your excellent sister in the summer and pay a longer visit, I trust, as this one has been so untimeously cut short,"

pursues the minister. "Let us hope Aunt Kezia will yet be spared to watch over her family many years. Hers is a valuable life, very valuable."

"Very valuable," agrees Cousin Jemima. She always agrees with Mr. Dods on principle, partly from opposition to Thyrza, who does not scruple to acknowledge when her thoughts are not as Mr. Dods's thoughts, and defends her opinions when they differ from his, with warmth and enthusiasm. However, Cousin Jemima is beginning to repent of having called Thyrza a young giddy girl, and determines that whatever she may think she will confine her ideas to herself for the future. The sight of the comfortable breakfast table and Thyrza's perfect politeness, have convinced her that the manse will make very snug summer quarters, without the drawback of having to pay anything for the lodgings; but if she calls Thyrza giddy and frivolous she cannot expect many more invitations from her cousin's wife. She is not unobserving, and she sees that Thyrza's power over the minister is unlimited, and that if she chooses to complain of Cousin Thyrza there will be no invitations to the manse from henceforth even for ever.

"Cousin Thyrza seems tired," she says, amiably, in pursuance of this new idea. "But,

doubtless, the fresh air and the drive through the glen will invigorate her."

"If she does not catch cold," answers Mr. Dods, anxiously. "She is very subject to a cough and sore throat in damp weather. The air is dry to-day, at any rate. My dear, should to-morrow not be fine, you must hire a close carriage from the Carmylie Arms, at which inn you will put up the gig and pony, and Rattray will get a lift out here in it, as it will be his day for walking to the post. How very shabby the paint is getting! It must be painted before the summer, or else I think I will get you a basket carriage. They are not expensive, and can be got pretty cheap. Now, dear, remember about the close carriage."

"Ye-s," returns Thyrza, hesitatingly. She is a very bad actress, and had Mr. Dods been a little sharper he must have seen there is something weighing on her mind. She has not attempted to argue with herself; about Ferrier she could not argue. She has told herself he is her fate, and she is going. But she does not feel so happy at the thought of being with him always as she imagined she would do. Anything underhand or deceitful is peculiarly abhorrent to her naturally open, upright nature, and half the pleasure is already gone in being forced to con-

descend to the part she despises and detests—of hypocrisy and untruth. In her own estimation she has sunk very low. But still she is going. If Mr. Dods only knew that she is not feeling very well either this morning from the effects of the excitement of the evening before, coupled with a wakeful night and the uneasiness of her mind, he would have insisted on her remaining at the manse. Mr. Dods has never forgotten that in a great measure he compelled her to marry him, and the recollection of this causes him to be more generous and indulgent in gratifying her wishes than he might otherwise have been.

“You will be home, dear, by daylight tomorrow. I should not be happy about you unless you were.”

Thyrza can scarcely make reply, for by tomorrow she and Ferrier will be sailing away over the sea together.

“Cousin Jemima will kindly let me know how Aunt Kezia is,” adds Mr. Dods, having tucked both ladies comfortably up in the gig and tied a “cloud” of scarlet and white wool round his wife’s head. “A pleasant journey to you both. Remember about the close carriage, my dear; stop a moment, Thyrza—dear me, Toby is quite frisky—as you are going to Middleby

you can take my gold spectacles with you to the jeweller's. One of the glasses has come out and wants putting in again."

Mr. Dods fetches his spectacles and would fain have stood to watch the gig out of sight had not the morning been so bitterly cold that his feet are nearly frozen with standing on the snow while assisting Thyrza and Cousin Jemima into the gig, so he returns to the parlour, and establishing himself in front of the fire, decides an animated dispute between the black cat and the terrier, in which the last is getting the worst of it, and then settles to an uninterrupted morning's work at the "Antiquities of Carmylie."

Cousin Jemima talks volubly to Thyrza with a view towards reconciliation and more visits at the manse, of the illness of Aunt Kezia, the number of children she has, the probabilities of the frost continuing longer, and recommends Thyrza to take out a stock of provisions with her from Queensmuir, as when the thaw comes the road through the glen will be completely impassable for weeks.

Driving through the glen is not so cold as might have been expected. There is no wind, but "mares' tails" blown across the sky into white fine threads predict a gale is not far off. The glen is divine in its white clothing of regal

ermine, too dazzlingly bright in the sunshine for the eye to rest upon with much pleasure. The pine-trees are powdered with frozen snow, the withered tawny brackens peering out at the sides of the scaurs are sheathed in armour of ice; here and there a few feathers on the snow give mute pathetic evidence that a murder has been committed on a moor fowl or coot by some rapacious hungry fox. Nevertheless Thyrsa and Cousin Jemima think twelve miles of this quite sufficient, as the foot-warmer in the gig is cold, and they are both rather stiff from sitting so long. They are not sorry when the gig rattles down the steep brae called the Roods Street into Queens-muir. The clock in the town-house is pointing to 10.20 as Thyrsa pulls up Toby at the Bank door.

"There is Cousin Thyrsa!" exclaims Tom to Tertius, "I'm going out to speak to her. Mr. Jardine, I don't feel all right to-day."

"What's the matter?" asks the accountant, suspiciously.

"I've got awful toothache in a big double tooth, left side, under jaw. Can I go to the chemist's for a bottle of creosote?"

"If you don't stay more than ten minutes you may."

Tom goes out through the red swing doors,

muttering, "That fellow would run a mile for a farthing, and skin a flint for a red herring."

"Hallo, Cousin Jemima, I thought you were to be at the manse for the next month?"

"Thomas, Providence has otherwise intended."

"Oh, blow! I say, Cousin Thyrza, aren't you going to speak to me?"

"We have not a minute to lose," exclaims Miss Tod, looking at the town-clock. "Tell Cousin Helena that Cousin Thyrza will spend the night at the Bank. My dear, you had forgotten to mention it. I am glad I remembered. Thomas, will you follow us to the station, and please be so good as to bring up Tobias and the gig to the Carmylie Arms?"

Tobias shows signs of preferring to enter the stableyard of the inn, and is with some difficulty made to trot to the station. It happens to be a great cattle market in Queensmuir, the last of the season, and the station is filled with farmers, drovers, and cattle-dealers. Drove of sheep and herds of cattle are being driven and hustled about in all directions, and the confusion is great. Miss Tod never thought to be grateful to the irreverent Tom for anything, but she is extremely thankful to behold his impertinent *nez retroussé* and shock head. He gets the tickets for herself and Thyrza, delivers her from rushing into the

smoking compartment, and storms at the guard until that functionary provides them with a hot tin. Ferrier will leave Queensmuir by a later train. Cousin Jemima goes straight to Aunt Kezia, when they arrive at Middleby; so Thyrza will soon be quit of her. She will take Mr. Dods's spectacles to the watchmaker, and then go to Fisher's Hotel, there to wait for Ferrier. In an hour-and-a-half they are in Middleby. Cousin Jemima parts from Thyrza with an affectionate farewell, the affection of which Thyrza does not notice owing to her pre-occupied mind. Mr. Dods's spectacles being disposed of at the watchmaker's, she inquires the way to the hotel where Ferrier has told her to wait for him. It is close to the docks, not very inviting-looking, being somewhat grimy in its exterior, and as Thyrza subsequently finds, not much better in its internal arrangements. It may be her imagination, but she fancies the woman to whom she makes known her request eyes her oddly when she mentions that a gentleman—here she is rather at a loss, for Ferrier has not said what name he will take—will call in the course of the afternoon, and she finally designates him as Mr. Jones. She has bungled in giving her own name, first saying Dods and then Jones. Had she known the woman is an elder

sister of Tibbie's, employed as a chambermaid at Fisher's Hotel, she would not have been so much surprised. She declines having any refreshment for the present, and Tibbie's sister leaves her to go back to her work. It will be some time before Ferrier can possibly come, so by way of beguiling the monotony of waiting, she makes a tour of the room containing the invariable steel engravings and ornaments to be found in an hotel of its stamp.

There are the shades of wax flowers and wax gooseberries, and strawberries, and green peas, on the mantelpiece, always to be seen in a second-rate hotel; the flash mirrors and gilt velvet furniture, which somehow seems to haunt such places, the smell of mouldy cheese, and departed dinners that have left tokens of their existence in the thick dusty hangings. Not that Fisher's is a bad hotel for Middleby; but for a large manufacturing city, that town is singularly destitute of clean, well-managed hotels. Then there is the picture of the Queen in her coronation robes; a portrait of Prince Albert; the Four Seasons, consisting of four simpering women, with appropriate emblems of the seasons they are supposed to represent; "Noah Offering up Sacrifice after leaving the Ark;" and the "Day of Judgment." Before

long Thyrsa has grown familiarized with the aspect of Noah, and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and she could nearly have reproduced with closed eyes the various figures collected round the Sacrifice. The last picture is almost too dreadful for calm contemplation, and she walks up and down the room with hasty irregular steps to keep herself warm. There is a fire, but it has only been recently kindled, and it smokes more than it burns. Few things are more trying than a lengthened period of waiting at either a railway station or an hotel, especially if the person waiting has anything to be anxious about. To begin with, it is so dreary to wait among strangers; and the rooms provided for the weary traveller—wearied perhaps both in mind and body—are so very dismal. The time seems to hang heavy do what one will, the minutes are hours and the moments minutes.

Thyrsa, not a patient mortal at any time, becomes more and more impatient as the hour fixed for the arrival of Ferrier's train passes without bringing him. Tired of walking about, she takes up her position at one of the windows. Surely he will come, after all his professions and promises. No one is such an ingenious self-torturer as a jealous man or a woman very much in love. Numbers of suspicions and doubts

cross her mind as she looks out upon the sailors belonging to a jute vessel unloading the cargo with laugh and song, the pier extending a quarter of a mile into the sea and the decorated arch known as the Queen's Arch, Middleby, looks grey and dirty. It is only in the country that snow is beautiful. Its dainty whiteness is soon despoiled, trodden under foot, and spattered with mud and smuts. In Middleby, it is out of its element among the traffic, and business, and smoke, of houses, and almost countless factories, and steamers; and very wretched and forlorn and deplorable it is, as the feet of men and horses trample it into slush.

"Mr. Jones," announces the maid who has stared so hard at Thyrza, and who is the sister of Tibbie, the minister's servant. She looks at Ferrier as she has looked at Thyrza. It is, however, no business of hers, and she closes the door without remark.

"So you have come, darling!" is Ferrier's exclamation, on seeing Thyrza. "I scarcely dared to ask the question whether Mrs. Jones were here or not. The train was late, my pet, which accounts for the delay. Have you had long to wait?" and for the next moment Thyrza feels as if she were well repaid for all she has

undergone this wearisome day, and for all she is giving, by the mere fact of his presence.

"I have not failed you," she says.

"Well, about going by the steamer. The weather looks stormy, and I think we had better go by the mail to Liverpool. I have secured a through-carriage for ourselves, first class; and then you can lie down and rest. I must be very careful of my precious one now I have got her. What would you like to do until the train starts? We have nearly an hour and three-quarters yet."

"I should like to go out, monsieur. I am so cold. I cannot get warm. The room is so close and stuffy, too."

"So it is. You are very cold. I don't think it will do you any good to go out in this raw chill air."

"The air seems to stifle me."

"It is a horrid little place. Well, darling, we'll go out then and walk about a bit; and we'll get some dinner afterwards at the dining-rooms, where I dined on the day of Gow's trial."

Accordingly, Ferrier summons the waiter to pay the hotel account; and having done so, he and Thyrsa pass a landing on which Tibbie's sister and one of the waiters are standing.

“Is it no a peety?” the woman says. “She is but a lassie, and she disna ken what she is doing. A woman can buy everything but an honest name, and it’s nae doot it’s a hard thing tae gie the go-by tae yer sweetheart.”

Ferrier cannot help hearing the observation, and he can only trust that Thyrsa has not heard it likewise.

“Where would you like to walk, darling?” he asks, with redoubled tenderness.

“We shall not meet many people on the pier, shall we?”

“No, I think not.” And to the pier they take their way, underneath the Queen’s Arch.

The river looks cold and dreary enough with its leaden opaque expanse of water and dull patches of wet sand, gradually filling up with the incoming tide; but the west is a blaze of red gold shot across by ragged black clouds. Against the grandeur of the wild stormy sunset stand out the great masts of the jute merchantmen, the dark rakish funnels of steamers, the pulleys and windlasses, and cranes, and stray engines sent adrift to drag along heavy burdens to the docks; and gigantic chimneys, seeming as if they would fain rival the tower of Babel in height; and rising over the huge manufacturing city is the smoke from thousands and hundreds

of thousands of households above which the crimson banner of parting day looms lurid and ominous through the murky misty atmosphere.

Ferrier and Thyrsa walk a little beyond the first turning of the pier, and in a moment they are away from the bustle and noise and hum of the men working at the docks, and the tumult of human life in the busy crowded streets.

"How very curiously the people in the hotel looked at us, monsieur!" says Thyrsa.

"That is exactly what I want to avoid," answers Ferrier, his thoughts recurring to that "confoundedly impudent" woman. "When we are clear of England we shall be out of all that."

"All what, monsieur?"

"Oh, nothing, darling," alarmed by a change in her tone. "I think we will try another hotel and have dinner there. There must be some better places in Middleby than Fisher's. It may be romantic here, but it is cold, and we have a long journey before us, and I should like you to get thoroughly warm."

"There was something, monsieur——"

"I wish to heavens we were out of Scotland," he answers, evasively. "I should not care for the whole universe then."

"Oh, I understand," she cries, "people will

talk and say dreadful things. And perhaps you will not like it, and I shall have brought it all upon you. Oh, monsieur, monsieur, I never thought of it in that light. All I thought of was that I should be with you, and we should never be parted again. I never thought of it like that."

"Don't think of it like that now," he says vehemently, "sweet one."

"I cannot go with you, monsieur," she goes on, "Mr. Dods would break his heart. You see I did not know, I did not think—I——"

"But you don't think anything of breaking my heart. Thyrsa, you don't love me."

"I do, monsieur, you know I do. No, you don't know, you never can know how I love you."

"And yet you go from me to let me live my life alone. It has not been such a happy one that I can afford to lose my only earthly treasure. If you knew how I have planned and dreamt how we should live for each other, and how I would work for you, I think you would have a little pity and mercy for me."

His words touch her warm heart as he means they should touch her. Will she be able to resist his fervent pleading? She is only a girl, and a girl so constituted as to be entirely led by her affections.

“Darling Monsieur Jack——”

“Then I am your darling. Oh, Thyrza, you will not surely fail me at the last moment.”

“Monsieur Jack, I love you with my whole heart, thou knowest it, but I must go home to my manse. You love me now,” returning to English, the French *tutoyer* is, however, most familiar to her, “but think if you did marry me, my beauty, such as it is, might fade, and you would weary of me, and you are of a jealous disposition; you might think when I talked with other men, ‘Ah, so she laughed and talked with me.’”

“Look at me, Thyrza, darling.”

He has got his arms round her, for they are alone—they two—with the great waste of waters before them and no living creature near but a couple of Mother Carey’s chickens riding triumphantly on a “white horse” about to break on the stone wall of the pier; she turns her face to his, and the red light from the sunset falls on her soft pale cheeks and dark eyes. “And besides,” she proceeds, rapidly, “you think so much of honour that there would be always the stain upon me of having left Mr. Dods for you.”

“No, no, I should never think so,” he breaks in, but she interrupts him, continuing—

“ You would not tell me though you thought so, yet I might often fancy that was in your mind, and your pity and the loss of your respect would kill me. It has all come upon me like one flash of lightning. You will be a great rich merchant yet, Monsieur Jack, and you will forget me and marry some one else.”

“ If you leave me I shall go straight to the devil,” he answers, turning pale almost to the lips under the bronze of his dark skin.

“ No, monsieur, you will be a good man. In reality you love good things best. It is only your way of talking which makes one think you are black.”

“ Thyrsa, I can't let you go, my love, my life, my soul, my salvation,” and he locks his arms more tightly round her, “ darling, we shall be so happy in China. When I am with you I am in heaven. You have shown me what a woman can be if she likes.”

“ Oh, God, give me strength to go,” she cries, rallying all her energies and courage. “ Oh, monsieur, help me. I want to come, but don't beg me to any more. I am pleading against my happiness, but what kind of happiness can that be which has not the blessing of God? How could I ask for a blessing upon either of us?

If you loved me, if you do love me, you will let me go."

"As you are so anxious to get away from me I will let you go," he says. "Go then from me, Thyrza, but go quickly, if you are going. I shall not say good-bye to you ; I can't," and he pushes her from him.

She has not gone three steps away before he is again beside her.

"Oh, my darling, don't be afraid of me ; I'm not going to keep you against your will. I was never good enough for you, sweet one. Forgive me, will you ? Kiss me, darling. No woman's lips will again press mine, and there are no kisses in heaven, where you will be, while I am down, down in the place below. We shall never meet again in this world."

"Oh, monsieur, don't, don't say that," she exclaims, and Ferrier with a mad burst of passion and wild longing seizes her supple, slender waist and covers her hands, her lips, her eyes, her hair, with kisses. He still holds her, deaf to her entreaties and remonstrances, and showers a thousand kisses on her pale face and her brown throat. And she—she does not struggle in his grasp. In the fiery light of the stormy sunset she is very white—deadly, deathly white. He

turns her face to his and gazes at her as though he would never leave off gazing. He is learning every feature by heart, to remember when he is once more in China at his house Sans Souci up the Yang-tse-Kiang.

“Is it to be good-bye, Thyrza?” he asks, huskily, when they have parted and he has once more followed on her steps. They are now near the fleets of jute vessels, and whalers, and the myriad masts and masses of rigging. Lights are shining at numerous mastheads and the red sunset is fading into a dull glare. His hand is on her shoulder, and as she looks into the bronzed face she has loved better than life the girl’s resolution almost fails her. Hundreds of women have run away and married the men with whom they have run away, and brazened it out before the world, and society has glossed it over partially; but it is revolting to Thyrza to do anything which it may be necessary to brazen out. And, to an extent, she has judged Ferrier rightly in saying, when he saw her with other men he might doubt her; the first flush of passion over, he might have looked on the wives of other men and thought that *they* had not been won under such circumstances. The very fact of Ferrier’s having been a fast man makes him all the more particular regarding his womenkind, and it was

Thyrza's perfect truthfulness, her lack of vanity, and her innocence which had fascinated him at first.

"Is it indeed good-bye, darling?" he repeats.

"Yes," she says, faintly.

"Good-bye for ever is it?"

"Yes," she answers, still more faintly.

"Don't ask me to stay, monsieur. God knows how I long to go with you. I can talk no more, and——"

She does not finish the sentence, but breaks away from him and is presently entangled among the people walking in the streets, and in the gathering darkness her slight figure is soon out of sight. He follows her as rapidly as possible, and reaches the station just in time to see a girl in a dark grey linsey gown and black cloak hastily assisted into a train which is already in motion. On making inquiries of a guard he is informed that it is the last train for that night to Queensmuir. He stands watching the shower of sparks flying like fiery stars among the grey filmy smoke left behind in great volumes by the engine until the train can be seen no longer, and then with a heavy sigh he turns away to get his ticket at the booking-office for Liverpool. Much as he has loved and does love Thyrza, perhaps he has never loved her so much as at

this moment, when he has seen the last of her on this side the grave, nor perhaps even on the night she saved his life at the risk of her own did he admire her more than he now does, when of her own free will she has renounced the future which lay before her with him to return to the humdrum, dull existence at the manse.

“Smart work, that,” observes a supercilious, young Middleby dandy in the same carriage as Thyrza, who has noticed her hurried effort to catch the train.

“Very smart,” answers an equally “swell” young lady, applying the remark to herself.

The train thunders along through the open country and dusky sombre pine woods, the orange-red light flashing among the russet trunks and drooping branches. Here and there cottages with the evening lamps lit, cheerful and bright in the gloaming, are visible at the foot of some upland moor or crouching by a sheltering plantation, or bordering an empty, clean-swept harvest-field. Onwards to Queensmuir the train steams, farther and farther from Ferrier and nearer and nearer to Mr. Dods and Carmylie.





CHAPTER XVII.

THE small old-fashioned Scotch town of Queensmuir is looking its best in the dim light of the gloaming, the plain features of its wynds and closes, not very pleasant places to persons possessing sensitive, olfactory nerves, being hidden by the carpet of snow. The lintels of the windows of the red sandstone houses, the blue slate roofs, the hands of the clock in the town-house, and the tail of the gilt dragon on the kirk steeple, are crusted white. Between the pinnacles of the town-house and the ancient dwellings next the graveyard, half buried in the earth, the accumulated dust of countless generations, are visible one or two sharp-pointed mountain peaks and dark pine forests. Queensmuir is *en fête*. The shops are brilliantly illuminated to show off the new goods and finery for the festivities of the new year, the Scotch

carnival, when the people go in *en masse* for making themselves ill with eating and drinking.

In front of the Bank there is a glorious slide, a slide of slides, smooth as glass, without a rough place in it, extending from the British Jute Company to the Carmylie Arms. It has been carefully fostered by the unremitting attention of Tom Hislop and a watering-can. Several individuals have already fallen victims to the treacherous slipperiness of this slide, to the overwhelming joy of the small boys and the very moderate delight of the aforesaid afflicted ones. They have risen, rubbed themselves, and uttered many awful threats of future dread consequences. On this slide, Tom Hislop and a number of boys and girls are enjoying themselves. The frost is giving way in the immediate neighbourhood of the houses, and occasionally some loosened snow thunders from the roofs on to the pavement with a noise like a miniature avalanche, covering the foot passengers with a *gratis*, though ungrateful, shower-bath.

“Cousin Thyrsa!” says Tom, joyfully, extricating himself from a heap of struggling fallen companions and a mass of snow. “Mother will be pleased to see you, and Robertina is bursting to ask what you think of her new winter bonnet.”

“I am going home to-night, Tom,” replies

Thyrza, putting her hand on his jacket sleeve.

“ Oh, you can’t, every one will be so disappointed, and there’s Tertius has written a splendid charade in blank verse, word *Hallowe’en*, and he wants you to take the heroine’s part, and we’re going to give a hop next week for the clients; only think, a ball at the Bank !”

“ Tom, will you get the gig for me from the Carmylie Arms? The inn is full of farmers, and I don’t like to go to the landlord myself.”

Even the boy is struck by the tone of utter hopelessness and sadness in her voice. He admires “ Cousin Thyrza ” in the way many a lad of his age admires a young and pretty married woman, while entertaining the most profound and lofty contempt for all other women, especially that maligned class of bipeds, old maids.

“ It’s going to snow like fury,” objects Tom; “ Cousin James would take off my head if you were allowed to drive to Carmylie to-night.”

“ You must make my apologies to Cousin Helena, I can’t come to the Bank, Tom. Don’t try to find out why—I can’t. I should be very bad company, and would only spoil your merry party.”

With instinctive delicacy Tom does not press the matter further. Rough and rude as he often

is to Cousins Jemima and Keren-Happuch, his pet aversions, he is always the acme of deferential politeness to Mrs. Dods. The gig and Toby brought out, he fastens the apron in front for Thyrza, and as he does so he says—

“Is it anything connected with that old skin-flint, Cousin Jemima, which has bothered you?”

“No,” answers Thyrza, “you’ve been a very good boy, Tom,” detaching a little locket from her watch-chain. “I heard you say the other day you wanted a locket and could not afford to buy one. Keep it until your lady-love gives you a better.”

“My! it is a beauty; like yourself and no mistake,” stammers Tom.

“Good night,” says Thyrza, gathering up the reins, and preparing to set off through the kirk wynd.

“I say, Cousin Thyrza, have you had any tea?”

“No.”

“Did you get any grub in Middleby?”

“No, I did not feel hungry.”

“That’s Cousin Jemima’s little game. She’s the greatest miser that ever lived. I’ll be back before you can say Jack Robinson,” and he disappears into the inn, returning almost as quickly as he has said with a smoking hot cup of tea and a plate of bread-and-butter.

“Good night, now, Cousin Thyrsa,” he continues, when she has finished the tea, the bread she cannot swallow. “As you drive away think of poor me catching it on all sides because I did not insist on your coming in.”

“Thank you, Tom, you are very kind,” she replies, “I am sure I shall think of you.”

“Shan’t I get a jobation, that’s all?” he exclaims, taking a short run and a long slide, while Thyrsa puts Toby into a jog-trot and drives out of the kirk wynd into the country.

There ought to have been a moon according to the calendar, but owing to unforeseen cloudy circumstances over which she has no control, she will not shine to-night. Toby knows he is going home and trots along gallantly, thinking of the corn and hay and comfortable stall at the manse stable. It had begun to snow pretty heavily before Thyrsa left Queensmuir, and by the time she has got over a couple of miles of ground a storm of wind and mingled snow and rain has arisen. She never thinks of turning back to Queensmuir, which would have been her best plan, as there are still ten miles between herself and Carmylie; it seems to her she can find no peace until she has told Mr. Dods all her story, and when he does hear

it she believes he will not be so very angry with her.

Past the avenue gates and trim lodges of Lillieshill she goes, over the old grey bridge of the Bogg, where Ferrier and she had sat and discoursed in the sweet summer time, the smoke of the mill curling up above the bare branches of the ash trees, whose future leaves are snugly housed in black buds against the winter's storms and blasts. The Bogg ripples over its pebbly sandstone bed, and the speckled trout—its tenants—rejoice the fishing season is ended, so that they can swim to and fro without the risk of being conveyed to a sphere where water does not abound. The naked snow-clad branches of the trees look weird and ghostly as Thyrza drives past them round a turning which takes her away from the cultivated land into the country of heather and hills and peatmosses.

The wind meets the gig and its occupant with no loving embrace, blowing down from the frozen, snowy slopes of the Witches Law, sending the snow right in Thyrza's face, nearly blinding her and stinging her skin like nettles. Scarcely a glimpse of mountain or moorland is visible, only the piles of huge white wreaths or drifts at the side where the brae has descended to the road. A thick grey cloud stretches all round, and the

fast-falling snow renders it darker than it else would have been. Long ago the red sunset has died out, and to Thyrza it appears as though she will never reach Carmylie.

The wind blows in fitful tempestuous gusts, obliging Thyrza sometimes to halt for a few minutes to rest stumpy, broad-backed Toby, who begins to feel the journey homewards very long indeed. Twice she gets out of the gig to knock the balled snow from the pony's hoofs. The sensible animal holds up first one hoof and then another without requiring to be told, and then he jogs on again over the moor among the heather. While the road, or rather the beaten track answering to that name, for there are no proper roads in Kilniddryshire, wound up to the clouds, ascending a hill and down to the depths of the valley below, Thyrza had no trouble in keeping the gig in the ruts made by other vehicles; but as the evening grows later and darker, merging into night, she can no longer see her way. To her dread and consternation, she finds herself near unfamiliar landmarks and Toby is getting very tired. He is unable to trot on the softening snow and proceeds along slowly and wearily. The air is raw and cold, piercing to the bones under the thickest clothing. The snow falls steadily, evenly, thickly, the flakes

covering Thyrza until she is fairly whitened, while Toby's back and ears, and mane and harness, are lodgings for the flakes. Thyrza tries backwards, forwards, slantways ; to all injunctions from whip or reins Toby refuses compliance, and deliberately lies down on the snow. Thyrza jumps out of the gig, trying to rouse him. The wind is bitter and cutting ; but while her hands are so cold she can scarcely hold the reins, and her feet without any feeling in them, her head seems on fire, and the desolate moorland appears to swim before her. "God grant I may keep my senses until I get home," she entreats, as she kneels on the snow beside Toby, and at length he consents to rise from his recumbent position. He gives a little whining of content and recognition and sets off more rapidly than he has done before. Thyrza lays the reins loosely on his back, and to her relief she soon perceives from the easy movement of the gig that she is once more on the road, and not far from the avenue gates and pine avenue of Carmylie.

Through the whole long drive she has not met a single living creature. A very few minutes more bring her to the wicket-gate of the manse garden. Toby has no objection to stand still after his exertions. Tibbie has not bolted the

door yet or else has forgotten to do so, and Thyrza, without pausing to shake off the snow, enters the parlour. Mr. Dods is not yet in bed, and looks up in speechless amazement at seeing his wife standing before him. He is writing at a table near the fire, which is burning brightly, a brass kettle is within the fender, and a tumbler of toddy, from which Mr. Dods from time to time has taken a sip, is on the little shelf beside the mantelpiece. Peter lies in undisturbed possession of the arm-chair, and Snap rolled into a furry ball is at his feet. This is very simple and very quiet; but to Thyrza there is a great charm in its unpretending homeliness.

“How beautiful you are looking, Thyrza!” exclaims Mr. Dods, leaning back in his chair, and pushing off his spectacles with an irresistible outburst of admiration of his wife.

The lamp sheds a warm soft light on her dark divine-impassioned eyes and brown crimsoning cheeks, and the snow flakes which have settled among the heavy, loosened braids of her hair begin to melt into diamond dewdrops of water from the heat of the room and shine like pendent jewels.

“My dear, it was most imprudent of you to drive through the glen on such a dreadful night

of snow and rain," says the minister, a little reproachfully.

Thyrza tries to answer; but her voice dies within her, and it is not until she has made several attempts to speak that she recovers control over it, and even then it is very hoarse and low.

"Poor Toby is standing at the gate, Mr. Dods."

"Then I will stable him up for the night. My dear, I fear, I very much fear, that you have endangered your health by this drive. Had I known I should have been extremely uneasy concerning your safety," dislodging Peter unceremoniously from the arm-chair, which he places in front of the fire for his wife. "Your hands are like ice and your feet the same, I suppose."

"I wanted to come to you," she answered, sitting down in the chair.

"Did you really, Thyrza?" he says, earnestly, gratified beyond the expression of words. "I only trust you will be none the worse of the prolonged exposure to the bitter cold and night air. Your throat is so delicate that you cannot take too much care of it. I will put Toby into the stable and come to you, my dear, before many minutes are over."

The minister takes Toby to the stable and

rubs him down, gives him a warm mash for his supper and locking the door goes back to the manse. Thyrsa has retired to rest. From being deadly cold the whole day, her numbed limbs have recovered their circulation, and she is in a burning fever of heat. Her throat pains her whenever she tries to swallow or to speak, and it is with the utmost difficulty she can draw a deep breath.

“Thyrsa dear, I have brought you some supper,” setting a small tray on the bed, and wrapping a red dressing-gown round her. “Are you quite well?” taking her little hand and feeling her pulse. He is horrified at the rapidity of the beats.

“Oh yes,” she replies, every word costing her great pain in the pronounciation. “I was cold, but I am hot now. Mr. Dods, I ought not to have gone to Middleby; it was my fault, all my fault,” she ends, incoherently.

They are the last sensible words she says for hours. The minister does not go to bed that night but hangs over her distracted and almost beside himself with agony at her sufferings, which he can do so little to alleviate. The pain is evidently in her throat, and she speaks seldom. Towards morning she is no better. She has received a severe chill. And Mr. Dods, while

hoping it is only a bad feverish cold, cannot prevent himself from dreading the worst.

The morning brings no abatement in the storm of wind and rain, the snow having been beaten in the contest, and the glen is now completely impassable, from the melting snow, for either man or beast. It has been a wild night at sea, too. A sloop has been wrecked not far from Carmylie harbour, and the crew drowned. Fragments of the wreck are cast up on the beach by the angry waves. Dead poultry, rabbits, bits of furniture, and spars of the ill-fated vessel are washed ashore. The ship has literally been split in two by the force of the water, and one half is grounded near a sunken reef of rocks close to the natural pier. The fishermen in blue jerseys and long boots are down on the beach watching the sea and gathering in pieces of the wreck for firewood.

Mr. Dods's life has hitherto been a quiet uneventful one. Nothing in the whole course of it has so stirred his soul and his passions as his marriage. At fifty-two years of age he had fallen helplessly in love with a girl of seventeen, and like the summer sunlight on the yellow brcomy knowes and purple heather round Carmylie, she is fading away very quickly from him. The minister had been attached to his father

and mother as a dutiful son should be attached to his parents, and they had died and been buried in the kirk-yard under the hedge of sweet-scented wall-flowers lining the kirk wall in the spring with their fragrant blossoms, but he had not mourned them for ever. It was in the course of nature that they should die and be buried, and that their son should enter into their inheritance. "Which is the nearest, which is the dearest?" It is the wife. He cannot bear to think of parting from Thyrza; he has wearied disconsolately when absent from her for even a single day, and now to part from her through the narrow gate of death! The more intimately he knew her, the more the girl increased in favour with him. And deceive himself as he will, he sees that though calmer and more conscious, she is much weaker and less capable to resist the sickness that has taken such grievous hold upon her. How desolate the places will be that have known the charm of her presence! What will he do when she is gone!

Summoning Tibbie to stay with Thyrza, he goes out to the village. His remedies have proved unsuccessful, and his medical knowledge is slight. For cases of emergency, and when the road to Queensmuir is closed as it now is, he has a few simple medicines in a chest. In

the winter the glen is often impassable for three weeks at a time. Queensmuir being out of the question in regard to medical aid, Mr. Dods turns his attention to the possibility of despatching men in a boat by sea to Middleby. But a glance at the churning fury of the waters sending the spray dashing high over the manse roof even to the field behind, convinces him that no boat could live in such a sea ; and that even if it could live, no medical man valuing his life would put off in a small boat to row twenty miles through the dangers of the sand-bar, and face those iron-bound walls of rock and steep cliffs. He realizes the fact that the notion is mad and hopeless. After all, he thinks, the man might only have tortured her with his remedies. She is young ; she has never had a dangerous illness before ; her constitution is strong and vigorous. All this is in her favour, and while there is life there is hope.

“ If it is the Lord’s will that she should die, not all the doctors that are in Scotland could heal her ; but gin it is the Lord’s will that she should live, she’ll get weel without doctor or medicine,” says Tibbie, with the true fatalism of her race and her religion, “ it a’ depends upon whether her hour is come.”

The minister walks with subdued and reverent

tread into his wife's room, where she has spent so many dreamy hours in the autumn at the open window looking out at the solemn grand mass of the Witches Law, with its three peaks, while the sea ebbcd and flowed through the stake-nets over the brown-coloured dulse rocks under the splintered crags, shining like the silver scales of a salmon just lifted out of the trap, with the water glistening upon it, and the golden sunshine flickered on the long line of blue foam-crested billows, as blue, if not bluer than the sky above it.

And now Thyrsa is dying.

She lies very tranquil and still, so still that but for the straining efforts to draw an easy breath, one would think it must be death.

The colour has gone out of the brown cheeks ; the soft eyes are fixed on the minister as if entreating him to help her ; the feverish lips are unclosed, and the delirium has ceased. Mr. Dods almost hustles Tibbie out of the room as she repeats, that if the girl's hour has come she must wear away, and kneeling beside the bed he gazes long and earnestly at Thyrsa. He scarcely recognises Thyrsa, the gay, bright, happy Thyrsa, so fond of " fun " and dancing and pretty dresses and pretty things and high-heeled shoes, and all manner of little girlish vanities and innocent

frivolities, in this pale tired face between which and the next world there seems to be so brief a space.

The wintry afternoon deepens into the gloaming. The gale goes down and the wind comes softly, blowing from the lone heights of the haunted Witches Law, and the wild bleak moorlands, sobbing, moaning, *crooning* with the sad sound a rain wind alone has, lamenting its woes to the salt-sea waves, sighing round the eaves of the old manse, while the rain falls heavily on the roof, dripping and splashing over the slates.

Mr. Dods has lighted a lamp and placed it on a table some distance from Thyrza's bed; the gloaming and the night are just about to meet. She looks at him with a gleam of intelligence in her bright eyes.

"My dear," he says, inquiringly, "what can I do for you?"

She makes a gesture with her hand towards the Bible; and the minister finding a chapter which has always been a favourite of hers begins to read that most beautiful chapter which has given comfort to many a broken-hearted man and sorrow-laden woman, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you."

But the minister's voice grows hoarse and choked ; he cannot read nor see the words, for hot bitter scalding tears such as men rarely shed, wrung from the unspeakable sorrow of his soul, fall on the sacred page and obliterate the holy message for wounded hearts like his.

“ Oh, God, spare her ! ” he cries, “ she is my all.”

He prays as he has never prayed before, although he has offered up many prayers both in his pulpit and in the privacy of his chamber, eloquent prayers, earnest prayers, prayers adapted to the wants of the fisher-folk and the shepherds and farmers in the glen ; still he never prayed as he now does. For he is praying for the light of his eyes, for the joy of his life, what is necessary to his happiness, what he values beyond all things, past, present, and to come, for his girl-wife, Thyrsa. The worth of prayer comes home to him now.

Yet how weak, how impotent, how utterly helpless in himself, he feels in the presence of the great angel of Death, greater than the greatest power of life. Weighed in the balance how poor and worthless are the highest honours of the world ! How vainly do his great love and burning prayers contend against it ! How feeble his most passionate struggle against it, when the Great Reaper steals

into the bedroom, and the silver cord loosed, and the golden bowl broken.

"Thyrza dearest, shall I raise your head for you?" he asks, with infinite love in his action and voice.

But little Thyrza is very still, death has quieted the hot fever, all the restlessness, and eager passionate intensity of her loving and innocent heart, ended all "the unsatisfied longings," and taken her over the dark mysterious waters of the unseen world to the eternal shore. Death ends the busy drama of life, and over its hopes and fears, its brief joys and more lasting sorrows, drops a heavy impenetrable curtain, from beyond which, though so many have gone before, none have come back to tell what lies behind.

"Thyrza dear," says the minister again, rising and bringing the lamp to the bedside.

And then he sees, that even while he prayed Thyrza has gone along the "silent starlit road of death."

THE END.

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